

THE CONCEPT OF REVOLUTION
IN SOCIAL FORMS:
A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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This thesis is dedicated to

Mairi Robertson

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Astract

This thesis presents a sociological analysis of the concept of revolution in social forms. It is argued that any concept of revolution makes available a version of the relationship of speech to language. The concept of a revolution in social forms is grounded in a view of the relationship of the revolutionary enterprise to the dialectical transformation of man's nature or essence.

Two modes of orientation to Marx's revolutionary theorising are analysed:

1. The principled version which understands Marx's theorising as offering a concept of revolution as universal and engaged orientation to principle.
2. The rule-bound version which views Marx as representing revolution in terms of technique - the 'correct rules' for subverting capitalism.

We investigate the redirection of the principled vision in Marx by Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and Mao. Finally we consider the rediscovery and development of the principled tradition in tendencies within modernism.

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Introduction

This thesis has undergone a very long period of gestation. It grew out of an initial concern with the philosophical and organisational parameters of the relationship of theory to practice. Eventually I realised that my real concern was to produce a theorisation of the concept of revolution. One might ask why study the concept of revolution? From my viewpoint there are two answers to that question. Firstly, the perspective which I am beginning to learn from and to practice (the analytic perspective referred to below developed by Peter McHugh, Alan Blum and Stanley Raffel) requires itself to be seen as nothing short of revolutionary. The kind of learning I have been engaged in has had a revolutionary impact upon those who have allowed its force to touch them. Secondly, like Arendt, I acknowledge the prescience of Lenin's comment that the twentieth century would be characterised as a century of revolutions. If a sociologist's role is conceived as exploring the wisdom of the ancients in relation to the concerns of the present (as I think that role should be interpreted), then using revolution as both resource and topic is an appropriate choice.

Every mode of theorising presents a conception of the relationship of speech to language, and this relationship provides one of the central foci of the dissertation. There are two options concerning the relation of speech to language, each

of which produces a different view of revolution. Firstly revolutionary theory can attempt to generate a sense of the groundedness of its own speech - to seek to orient to the idea of which revolutionary speech is an exemplar or expression. In short revolutionary theory can choose to be reflexive in its orientation to principle. This perspective in treating its topic (revolution) not as secured, or given, views topic as a resource. To theorise in this way is never to lose sight of the question of the good of revolution, ie to see theorising on revolution as a moral enterprise. A second view of revolution could choose to face away from the grounded character of its own speech - to choose to ignore the relationship of its speech to the idea of which its speech is an expression. This uncentred view would typically repress questions of the good or value of revolution, ie orienting nihilistically to the question of the good, the moral character of its own speech. Instead of orienting to the good of revolution, this perspective is committed to what the Greeks called 'techne'. This view is committed to the notion of revolution as rule, theory being conceived of in terms of utilitarian effectiveness. Each version of revolution presupposes a conception of man - a conception of the strongest possible speaker/actor, though this is again repressed and denied in the second version.

This thesis seeks to investigate a tradition of revolutionary thought - what I call the 'principled' version of Marx. In a very specific sense I trace the history of that tradition and

consider its development. I chose the term 'in a specific sense' to underline that this thesis is not what would conventionally be understood as 'the history of ideas'. For me tracing the history of a tradition (like Marxism) means attempting to orient to the intelligibility of its speech in the first place. That is, the continuous task is one of seeking to investigate reflexively the grounds of speech on revolution. Likewise developments and degenerations of the tradition are understood in terms of their ability to remain faithful to the principle of which that tradition is an expression. This is reflected in the structure of the dissertation. I consider the redirection of Marx's tradition by Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and Mao, and the rediscovery of that tradition in certain tendencies within modernism.

Perhaps I can exemplify the distinctiveness of this approach to the 'history of ideas' if I contrast this approach to an alternative and well known approach to the Marxist tradition. Leszek Kolakowski's massive three volume work 'Main Currents of Marxism' attempts an encyclopaedic review of the main tendencies (and some of the minor too) within Marxism. In no way is this text either aimed at a comprehensive review, nor of a sampling of 'representative' figures within that tradition. The authors I consider are treated as exemplary in the sense that they illustrate alternative modes of orientation to the tradition.

The perspective utilised in this thesis seeks the philosophy of the ancients as a source of inspiration. One of the guiding

influences of my concept of revolution is the Greek concept of Paedia - which concept the Greeks used to understand the way in which education is of necessity a revolutionary process. Paedia refers to a process by which a universal change is achieved in man with respect to his nature or essence. We see Marx's vision of revolution in terms of his understanding of revolution's place in relation to the dialectical development of man's nature.

A further sense in which this thesis has a different character to that of Kolakowski is in our view of modernism. For Kolakowski modern Marxist theorising is evocative of the terminal decline of that tradition. My view of modernism is quite different. While the state of much of modern Western Marxist theory has been fragmentary and partial in its analysis, I sense an attempt to overcome this isolation and dispersion in an attempt to reorient to and regenerate the tradition. I hope this thesis preserves some of the sense of re-orientation and openness characteristic of the best of modernism.

CHAPTER I

Section I

We begin with the question of what is the good of the concept of revolution in Marx. To ask such a question is to begin to investigate revolution as a morally oriented enterprise, one which shows a knowledge of the worth of revolution in itself. To see Marx's conception in this way, then, is to see revolution as being oriented decisively to principle. In being oriented to principle Marx, as revolutionary, is characterised as an actor who embodies a self-reflective concern for revolution. This is to say that the question of the good of revolution is not externalised in Marx, never seen as something which once oriented to, can be treated as secure or completed. The question of the principled (moral) conception of revolution treats the good, the worth of revolution as an enduring question i.e. a question which rather than being a barrier to be surmounted and eventually left behind, is seen as a constant stimulus and source of direction and influence.

Already, we have begun to generate a resistance to the notion of a principled conception of revolution, through consideration of its relationship to an alternative conception (one which is not truly faithful to Marx). This alternative would resist basic

questions concerning the good of revolution. We may call this version a technical or rule-bound reading of revolution in Marx. This version would see Marx as providing the best (correct) rules for revolution - someone who provides the necessary techniques for a subversion of capitalism. What is concealed in this version is the worth of the exercise in itself - seeing revolution for what it is.

Each version of revolution produces a version of an actor - either a competent actor - one who knows and enacts the rules skilfully in the technical conception - and one who is committed in the principled version.

In order to develop these issues we can consider the question of what is Marx's conception of man? This question is essential to the view of revolution as oriented to principle. The moral character of revolution is connected with Marx's understanding of the role of revolution in relation to the realisation of man's nature. Thus, when Marx talks of all of the pre-revolutionary history of man as pre-history he makes reference to the idea that man only becomes man, that man only begins to realise his (potential) nature after a genuinely socialist revolution. However, in order that we might develop a strong version of the principled conception of revolution in Marx, we shall generate some resistance to the question by considering the debate on the initial viability of Marx's conception of man.

The debate concerning the importance or otherwise of the question of Marx's conception of man is a pivotal moment in a broader debate which while not absent from the earliest period of Marxist debate, only surfaced as a serious issue in the context of modernist (i.e. post-Stalinist) discussion. 1 It is significant in itself that the question of Marx's conception of man should be rediscovered as an important question in the modern period. However, this question is raised in a subsequent chapter of the thesis (the final chapter concerning modernist concepts of revolution) and receives fuller discussion at that juncture. An exponent of a version of those modernists who treat seriously the question of Marx's concept of man is the Yugoslav Marxist, Gajo Petrovic. In relation to the debate we are considering he has the following to say: 2

"What makes a man-man? What, if anything, makes somebody more and somebody less a man? If Marx had bypassed these questions, they would still demand an answer. But nothing is more false than the assumption that Marx condemned discussion about man in general. It is unnecessary to quote texts from "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" because it is well known that Marx speaks there about man as man. But it is sometimes held that Marx later came to the conclusion that all general speculations about man are inadmissible. In support of this assumption some passages from "German Ideology" can be quoted. But is "The German Ideology" Marx's last word in philosophy? Did not he also write "Capital"? According to "Capital" the labour process is: "human action with a view to the production of use values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements; it is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man and Nature; it is the ever-

lasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather, is common to every such phase. It was, therefore, not necessary to represent our labourer in connection with other labourers; man and his labour on one side, Nature and its materials on the other, sufficed. As the taste of porridge does not tell you who grew the oats, no more does this simple process tell you of itself what are the social conditions under which it is taking place, whether under the slave owner's brutal lash, or under the anxious eye of the capitalist, whether Cincinnatus carries it on in tilling his modest farm or a savage killing wild animals with stones."

Marx in "Capital", then, stresses that we can speak not only about labourer, capitalist and slave-owner, but also about man, labour and nature in general.

Now, while Petrovic is a writer who does aspire to a principled view of Marx's conception of revolution he can only take us part of the way to a mature reading. While his response to those who would debar the question which interests us is important in that it shows the vitality of this question in a text which opponents claim has exorcised the spirit which gives life to it, his answer is weak in certain respects and displays the extent to which he is still partially under the sway of a technical concept of revolution. Petrovic's argument is only partially adequate for the following reasons:

i. While it is necessary to make reference to texts where Marx discusses 'man in general' as opposed to man in one of his socially specific guises, as feudal lord or feudal serf,

capitalist, proletarian etc, one should avoid fetishising the text (letting the text rule our investigation). That is, it is necessary, as part of the process of reading, transforming or discovering a text to avoid treating the text as secured rather than as a problematic. Therefore discovering that Marx permits discussion of 'man in general' is not sufficient. We have to treat the text as something which invites engagement, invites interpretive labour, rather than as something which speaks for itself. There is a danger, then, in Petrovic that analysis can degenerate into pure scholasticism which risks the very technicality (letting the text rule) which he is seeking to avoid.

ii. It is noteworthy that Petrovic concedes that, "It is sometimes held that Marx later came to the conclusion that all general speculations about man are inadmissible. In support of this argument some passages from "The German Ideology" can be quoted. But is "The German Ideology" Marx's last word on philosophy?"

It seems, then, that Petrovic is offering us a reading which says that in some texts the question of man qua man is permitted by Marx, and in others e.g. "The German Ideology", it is treated as illegitimate. At best, Petrovic is saying that 'the last word' belongs to the philosophical Marx. Now, while there may be something to the argument that a 'mature' statement may be regarded as having greater depth than an 'immature' statement,

we are still left with the problem of accounting for this 'maturity' in more than simply temporal terms. That is to say, we are still charged with the question of accounting for the process of maturation, of which the final speech is the offspring.

What are we to make then of Petrovic's statement concerning "The German Ideology"? Are we to conclude, with Petrovic, that Marx was a vacillator, who would sometimes 'permit' consideration of questions of man's general nature, and sometimes forbade it? Clearly, an extreme form of this argument would be the postulation of a schizophrenic attitude in Marx, or (the very form of argument which Petrovic is trying to resist) the view, best exemplified by Althusser ³ that we are really dealing with two thinkers in Marx, and not one at all - that Marx's thought is characterised by an 'epistemological break' marking off the 'pre-scientific' from the 'scientific' theorist. Or, are we to take a more moderate view, that has been adopted by some ⁴ that Marx simply 'changed his mind' on several issues, throughout his prolific writings.

Here we must distinguish between (a) a technical reorientation - where orientation to principle remains the commitment (this thesis argues that there are several of these sorts of change, e.g. as exemplified in the last section of chapter two concerning which area of the world was likely to experience the first revolutionary transformation to socialism) and (b) a change which expresses an abandonment of orientation to principle in

favour of technique. (An example of this change would be implied by Althusser's 5 reading of the early 'Hegelian' Marx concerned with issues of the nature of man, converting into the 'scientific' thinker who grounded his theorising in adequate conceptions of the lawful character of social structure.)

While Petrovic is an example of the writer who regards Marx's concept of man as a fundamental question, he stands in danger of being charged with the same kind of intellectual blindness ('wishing away' a text, or refusing to do the work of reading and transforming a particular text) he charges his opponents with.

iii. We can make an advance upon Petrovic if we choose not to face away from what on the surface might be taken to be a text which is uncomfortable for our reading. Here we recommend being engaged with the text rather than avoiding it. Orienting to what the text says in a deep way, rather than avoiding this commitment by shying away from what the text appears to say will aid the development of a conception of revolution as orientation to principle rather than rule. Our investigation will develop the principled conception by seeking to examine and transform the text of "The German Ideology", as we seek to engage with all of Marx's texts.

iv. What is addressed by Marx in "The German Ideology" and what makes Petrovic uneasy is the question of the relationship of

general conceptions of man (man's nature, his essence) to specific manifestations of that nature (man as plebeian/patrician, man as feudal lord/serf, man as capitalist/proletarian). The question is indeed faced squarely and directly in "The German Ideology". The following quotation is an example of this directness of emphasis. 6

".... we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real active men...."

For Marx then the issue is not the banning of general questions concerning man - 'real active men' are still to be seen as having a definite and identifiable nature which marks 'man' off from beast. What is at question however, is that generality does carry with it a risk. An excess of generality can detach its connection to the specific 'factually' real forms which the general collects together. The fundamental opposition which this extreme generally creates is the opposition between man as 'imagined' and 'realised' man. What is really open to critique is not general understanding but abstract understandings. Abstraction is generality which becomes detached or disengaged from reality.

Abstraction is literally utopian in the sense that it is unrealised and unrealisable - it has become disconnected from 'real' man. Abstraction, then, as the disengaged excess of generality is what is to be rejected as a starting point. In

terms of our conception of revolution, then, abstraction as a risk would entail seeing revolution not as orientation to principle (not as realisation of man's nature) but as fetishisation of principle - treating the general, treating man's nature as a secured entity, as a given.

This involves converting principle into a rule to be conformed with rather than as a process which requires orientation and commitment.

Section II

The questions we begin with are:

1. What is the conception of man which underlies Marx's version of revolution and...
2. What is the relationship between this conception of man, and revolution? - What is human about revolution?

In seeking to respond to these questions we can usefully recall two issues raised in the 'introduction' to this thesis.

(a) Firstly, we indicated that every theorist of revolution could be seen as presenting a version of the relationship of speech to language. So far we have begun to develop a view of Marx as offering a conception of revolution as an orientation to principle, rather than a reading of Marx which formulates the speech/language relation in terms of orientation to rule. Marx begins characterising man's essence (potential) in terms of constructing a version of the strongest possible speaker/actor. This speaker/actor exemplifies the principled orientation of the revolutionary to a standard. What kind of speaker/actor, then, is required by this version of revolution? We can begin to respond to this question by recognising that, for Marx, labour is

the basic, and defining characteristic of man. Labour, man's creative activity, is not to be understood, as it may be in the technical conception, and as it is within capitalism, as purely economic activity. Labour as the primordial activity of man is conceived of in a deeper sense. As Marcuse points out in Marx: 7

"Far from being a mere economic activity, labour is the 'existential activity of man', not a means for maintaining his life."

Labour is, as we shall see, a broad metaphor summarising the relationship of man to nature, man to his fellow man, and man to himself. In this way labour is seen as a medium of transformation in man's social interactions. However, if labour simply connotes any kind of broadly defined productive activity, then there are problems for insisting that that labour is particular to man; that man's essence is distinct from that of either brute or beast. The distinction between man's nature and that of the animal is a recurrent theme which never becomes submerged in Marx. For example, in "Capital", he argues against the utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham: 8

"To know what is useful for a dog, one must study dog nature. This nature is not to be deduced from the principle of utility. Applying this to man, he who would criticise all human acts, movements, relations, etc. by the principle of utility, must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch. Bentham makes short work of it. With the driest naivete he takes the modern shopkeeper, especially the English shopkeeper, as the

normal man. Whatever is useful to this queer normal man, and to his world, is absolutely useful. This yardstick then he applies to past, present and future."

So it is recurrently postulated that the 'species-character' of man is distinct from that of animal, but what does this mean? Do not animals also produce? What is the distinctive nature of labour that characterises Marx's version of the actor required in his vision of man?

The first characteristic of human creative activity, of labour, can be seen by considering the following excerpt from "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" 9

"...productive life is species life. It is life-producing life. The whole character of a species, its species-character, resides in the nature of its life activity, and free conscious activity constitutes the species character of man"

So the first distinction between man and beast in terms of essence, in terms of species-character, is that man's productive activity, his labour, is both free, on the one hand, and conscious on the other.

Let us consider what it means to say, in the first place, that human labour is to be characterised as free. Here we can again refer to Marx. 10

"It is true that animals also produce. They build nests and dwellings, like the beaver, the bee, the ant etc. But they produce only their own immediate needs or those of their young;....they produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so, while man truly produces only in freedom from such need".

Thus, while man may produce materially, in the first instance to satisfy his corporeal needs, in its essence, human labour in contradistinction to the productive activity of the beast, is production which goes beyond physical needs. In this way human labour is to be seen as different from pure productive activity in the sense that it can only be genuinely carried out where compulsion, as a stimulus is absent. All of this is to say that man relates to nature in a different way to the beast. The beast orients to nature in terms of survival; the beast displays an adaptive relation to nature, while man is oriented to shaping, or acting on, or transforming nature. However, in the act of labour man changes not just nature, but also himself. In this context we may consider the following two quotations from Marx....11

"The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It is not distinct from that activity; it is that activity. Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life activity. Only because of that is he a species-being. Or rather, he is a conscious being, i.e. his own life is an object for him, only because he is a species-being."

"It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a species-being. Such production is his active species-life. Through it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is therefore the objectification of the species-life of man : for man reproduces himself not only intellectually in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world that he himself has created." 12

Thus, labour or human productive labour is conscious activity as well as free activity, in the sense that man actively shapes nature, rather than simply adapts to nature. Therefore nature is not seen as something which rules man's existence, nature is not man's fate, it is actively shaped. Nature is something of which man is conscious. By shaping nature in terms of his own objectives, in terms of his conscious will, man can contemplate himself 'in a world he himself created.'

So labour is a self-creative, self-conscious, reflective activity, as it is conceived in Marx. Man not only works on nature, his 'inorganic body', he also re-creates himself through labour. In this way man's history is not to be construed as something abstracted from man:

Man creates his own history, not just through the transformation of nature, but also through his own self-creation. One concept which Marx provides for understanding this notion of human labour as free and conscious activity is that of praxis. Praxis is a concept of productive activity which has the characteristics of firstly, being free - i.e. activity which does not take place

under conditions of material or social compulsion, but is freely chosen by the actor, by the subject. Secondly, praxis has the characteristic of being self-reflective, action which displays a consciousness of the place of self and other. The actor required by Marx's concept of revolution is therefore to be considered as one who is situated; one who knows the place of self in relation to other, where other can be understood as both nature and other human beings.

(b) Thus far we have seen that the actor required by Marx's concept of revolution - Marx's concept of man - is to be seen in terms of a concept of praxis. This requires that the actor is seen as:

- (i) Acting freely rather than under compulsion.
- (ii) That the actor be self-reflective about his action, i.e. that the actor is self-responsible for his acts.
- (iii) That the actor is a situated member, in the sense that he is aware of self's relation to other, i.e. is oriented.

We can develop these questions e.g. the question of in what way the actor is oriented to principle, by recalling a second theme of the discussion of revolution in the 'Introduction'. In the introduction we considered the classical Greek idea of education

as a revolutionary activity. The concept of 'Paedia' can be understood as: 13

"... that which leads to turning the whole man round in his nature or essence."

Now, if revolution is to be conceived of as a turning, and a turning of the whole man 'in his nature or essence', we can see that in Marx, 'man' and 'the whole man' are intimately interlinked. Indeed we could not begin to theorise Marx adequately without noting this interconnection. The question of 'totality' and 'wholeness' in Marx's concept of man is a central concern for many analysts of Marx, and in particular for those I have termed elsewhere as 'Modernists'. * Indeed a recent conference was devoted entirely to this issue. 14 Articulate discussions of the place of the concept of totality, and in particular how this points up Marx's indebtedness to Hegel are presented by both Lukacs 15 and Marcuse. 16 Lukacs has the following to say: 17

"It is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality. The category of totality, the all

*In this connection one could list many writers. Some of the foremost are:

Marcuse, H.: "Reason and Revolution", McLellan, "Marx's Grundrisse", Fromm, E.: "Marx's concept of Man", Nicolaus, M.: "The Unknown Marx" in Blackburn, R.(ed.) "Ideology in Social Science", Lukacs, G.: "History and Class Consciousness".

pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts is the essence of the method which Marx took over from Hegel.."

The question of 'totality' in relation to 'dialectic' is discussed towards the end of this chapter. At this juncture we have to ask the question what is the character of this 'totality', this conception of revolution as a turning of the 'whole man in his nature or essence'. Here we must return to Marx's concept of praxis - of what distinguishes human labour from that of the beast. Consider the following.....18

"Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species - both his own and those of other things - his object, but also - and this is simply another way of saying the same thing - because he looks upon himself as the present, living species, because he looks upon himself as a 'universal' and therefore free being. Species-life, for both man and for animals, consists physically in the fact that man, like animals, lives from inorganic nature; and because man is more universal than animals, so too is the area of inorganic nature from which he lives more universal."

and....19

"The universality of man manifests itself in practice in that universality which makes the whole of nature his inorganic body, (1) as direct means of life and (2) as the matter, the object and the tool of his life activity. Nature is man's 'inorganic body', that is to say nature in so far as it is the human body."

and.....20

"..animals produce one-sidedly, while man produces universally...they produce only themselves while man reproduces the whole of nature."

Revolution as a turning of the 'whole man' relates to man's universal nature. Man is oriented universally, or totally, rather than producing 'one-sidedly', he produces all-sidedly, or universally. To locate this concept in terms of our earlier discussion of praxis, man is conceived of as an oriented, or situated being. While the beast can only relate to itself (its own species), man is an universal being in that he can relate self (the human species) to other (nature, other species). Universalism is a concept which is fundamental both to Marx's concept of man, and to his concept of revolution. Revolution provides the turn which transforms man's nature/potential as a total producer into historically realised form. Praxis then is a total conception of man - a conception of the 'whole man', rather than the partial man. Any partial conception of man, e.g. man as an economic being - even where the economy is an important focus of analysis - is to be rejected in Marx. Nor is man simply to be understood as a collection of his partial manifestations e.g. economic man plus potential man, since the concept of totality or universalism makes whole man a transformation of his partial, alienated forms. This aggregated concept of parts would still be one-sided rather than universal in the sense that it would have no place for the 'turn', or transformation of the partial into

the total i.e. aggregated man implies an evolutionary form of change, universal man necessitates a revolutionary form of change. *

To summarise, then, universalism characterises Marx's concept of both man and revolution. Universalism provides a conception of an engaged relationship between the part and the whole. There are, then, two extremes which universalism aids to moderate and transform. Firstly there is the extreme of partiality. Partial conceptions have no place for the 'whole man'; they disengage or detach the part from the totality within which the parts are integrated. In this sense partial versions of man amount to pure particularism, or specificity. The second extreme is an abstracted total view of man. Here the whole is reified or

* This distinction between two concepts of man in relation to views of social change is paralleled in the words of Thomas Khun, (Khun, T. "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions"), who draws a distinction between two concepts of science and respective views of scientific change. Khun attempts to distinguish between, on the one hand, a 'conventional', or 'text-book' version of science which produces an 'incrementalist' or gradualist perspective upon scientific change, and on the other hand a 'paradigm' model of social change which requires a revolutionary view of scientific change.

fetishised. Men in society are seen as detached entities; disconnected from the peculiar manifestations of man. This is the danger of utopianism, where principle cannot be oriented to. Abstraction treats principle as something to be conformed to, and hence converts a principle into a rule.

Focussing upon the interpretation of universalism helps to regenerate a familiar feature of Marxist theorising. The need to see every other sphere of existence as offering the possibility of revolution is an outcome of the stress upon man's universal nature. In particular, we can read the invasion of every mode of theorising and that there is a Marxist aesthetics, a Marxist psychology, a Marxist sociology etc., is an outcome of this principled commitment. Furthermore, as Marcuse indicates, a genuinely Marxist Theorising attempts to straddle the subject boundary specialisms - this too can be seen as an outcome to this commitment. c.f. especially Marcuse, H. "An Essay on Liberation".

Let us consider a partial concept of revolution. The partial conception of revolution is a rule-bound version of revolution. This conception requires an actor who conforms to the rules of a particular normative order. So, for example, a partial conception of revolution which is economically deterministic requires a view of man conforming to the normative rules of an economic system. We can carry through our understanding of the weakness of a partial conception of revolution by considering the following extract: 21

"For each new class which puts itself in the place of the one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aims, to represent its interests as the common interest of all the members of society, this is expressed in an ideal form, it has to give its ideas the form of universality. The class making a revolution appears from the very start, not as a class but as the representative of the whole society."

Marx is talking here of a specific type of partial revolution - a political revolution. Here he indicates, that of necessity, even in a partial revolution, universality requires to be stated as an aspiration. However in a partial revolution universality remains on the level of appearance (the partial revolutionary's speech cannot orient in a principled way to language - it has the character of groundless speech). In a partial revolution universality is a gloss for the particular interests of the ruling class. Therefore, in this conception of revolution, universality is unrealised and unrealisable.

According to Marx all revolutions, up to the present, were partial revolutions. This is evident if we consider the following extract from "The German Ideology", where he attempts to characterise the difference between all prior revolutions and the coming socialist revolution. 22

"In all revolutions up till now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was a question of a different distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labour to other persons."

In all previous revolutions, man's basic activity, then, labour, was only partially revolutionised. With the advent of capitalism all of this changed. Capitalism as a social system occupies a unique position with respect to the question of universalism, to the totality of man's creative powers. The uniqueness of capitalism is attributable to its capacity to universalise. It is to the character of capitalism's universality that we now turn. Capitalism is unique for Marx not just in the sense that it has developed man's productive powers to unprecedented levels, but that as a system it requires continuous revolutionising of its 'mode of production'. Consequently, capitalism contains within itself a dynamic which propels forward a particular form of universalising tendency. Consideration of the following extract may help us to understand this....23

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish

connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All the old established industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed.

They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. As in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness becomes more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation.

It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image."

So through the agency of the market capitalism universalises history. Capitalism creates 'world-historical' individuals out of previously isolated and segregated cultures by means of a forceful unification. This is not simply a geographical universalisation, nor even a purely material universalisation, it paves the way for a cultural universalisation since, 'in intellectual production', 'common property' is made of the private property of isolated cultures. The rational basis of prior forms of production has been transformed into the universalised character of capitalistic production. The all-sided, universalism of capitalism replaces its one-sided forerunners. Here we have one crucial criterion for a future socialist society. If socialism is to produce a genuine revolution it has to be achieved universally in the sense of internationally. Nationalism is synonymous with partiality and one-sidedness. The proletariat 'can only exist internationally' or 'world historically'. As such a socialist revolution differs from all previous revolutions to the extent that it achieves a change of the whole man - it is the first revolution to be genuinely universal. Capitalism plays a part in providing the necessary beginning for the development of future universal man in a socialist society.

It is quite clear that Marx's version of universalism is thorough going, in the sense that any barrier to man's development of his total being is to be swept aside. As we have seen national barriers are to be transformed into open doors. So too will

barriers which present themselves superficially as 'natural' barriers of difference. As Alfred Schmidt has pointed out...24

"Marx accepted no rigid facts about man, either of a spiritual or a biologico-material nature."

Just how far this sweeping aside of barriers to the attainment of universal development and man has to go is highlighted in the following extract...23

"Just as, previously, Sancho explained all crippling of individuals, and so of their conditions, by means of the fixed ideas of school-masters, without worrying about the origin of these ideas, so now, he explains this crippling by the merely natural process of generation. He has not the slightest idea that the ability of children to develop depends on the development of their parents and that all this crippling under existing social conditions has arisen historically, and in the same way can be abolished again in the course of historical development. Even differences that have arisen naturally within the species, such as racial differences, etc., about which Sancho has nothing to say, can and must be abolished in the course of historical development."

So race, like the nation-state may be a fact, but it is also a contingency, and as such is subject to historical transformation through human intervention. Thus far we have noted that capitalism is historically unique for Marx in that it is the first form of society to provide a drive towards the unification of a world system i.e. a form of universality. Marcuse makes this point when he says...26

"Hegel's philosophy revolved around the universality of reason: it was a rational system with its every part...integrated into a comprehensive whole. Marx shows that capitalist society first put such a universality into practice. Capitalism developed productive forces for the totality of a uniform social system."

However the universalism required by socialism, by a society which provides conditions where man can produce in harmony with his nature, is qualitatively different from the universalism developed in a capitalist society. Socialist (genuine) universality is not merely an extension to, nor elaboration of, nor a smooth continuation of the universality of capitalism. As I shall demonstrate the universalism of capitalism is a negative, inverted and dependent universalism, and requires transformation (revolutionary change) rather elaboration (reform). *

* The two alternative methods of conceiving of the relationship between socialist universalism and capitalist universalism may be formulated as revolution (change as orientation to principle) or reform (change as conforming to rule). The relation between revolution and reform from a Leninist perspective is taken up in chapter two. What is important here is to note that, to see socialist universalism as an evolution of capitalist universalism is to make no room for the idea of a turn in revolution i.e. that the rule-bound conception abstracts the whole from the turn.

In order to develop this argument further, we should pause to summarise. Thus far we have generated a principled concept of revolution which requires a particular view of man. The actor required in this version is seen as....

- a. One who acts freely rather than under compulsion.
- b. That the actor be self-responsible for his actions. The actor is conscious, self-reflective and self-creative.
- c. That the actor is situated i.e aware of and responsive to the self's relationship to other, i.e he is oriented, he is a SOCIAL being.
- d. The actor is a whole or integrated (universal) being rather than a partial or specialised member.

However, rather than integrating and fulfilling these elements of man's being, capitalist universalism negates or inverts them. The universalism of capitalism thus creates a universe of bondage

rather than liberation. Just as the concept of 'totality' was developed from Hegel, so too was the idea of its inversion or negativity. The concept of alienation * connotes this negativity.

In Hegel reality is spirit reflecting itself or realising itself. As later in Marx, creative activity is seen as the essential character of what it is to be human. Alienation in Hegel is the inability to comprehend that the world is not external (alien to) spirit.

Hence the resolution of alienation (the negation of alienation's negativity) lies in the liberating comprehension that the world is the creation of spirit. Marx's critique of Hegel, is, for the purposes of this discussion, quite straightforward. He has the following to say.....27

"In Hegel...the appropriation of man's objectified and alienated faculties is thus firstly only an appropriation that occurs in the mind, in pure thought..."

* The following discussion in no way attempts to give a comprehensive analysis of the idea of alienation. Useful, thorough discussions of the concept are to be found in Kolakowski: 'Main Currents of Marxism', Vol 1; Meszaros: 'Marx's Theory of Alienation'; Marcuse, H: 'Reason and Revolution'.

There are two points which we can understand from a consideration of the above. Firstly, Marx is not, here, rejecting Hegel's concept of alienation in its entirety. In its general form, it has validity. However, following on from the first point, it is its sheer (extreme) generality (its character as 'pure' thought) which limits his conception. In a word Marx is charging Hegel with abstraction. Hegel's abstraction provides a basis for the understanding of alienation, yet only on a partial basis.

We can further our understanding of the alienative character of universalism within capitalism by considering how alienation negates man's general nature and the specific elements of that nature.

With respect to man's general nature, alienation negates man's uniquely human essence by obliterating the distinction between man and beast. In being deprived of what is genuinely human in his productive activity man is reduced to beast. 28

"(In alienated labour) the result is that man feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions - eating, drinking and procreating - or at most in his dwelling and adornment - while in his human functions he is nothing more than an animal."

In this way the capitalistic (alienative) form of universalism negates man's human essence rather than confirms it. Alienation has a parallel impact upon each of the specific elements of man's essence.

(a) While the revolutionary view of man requires an actor who creates freely, rather than under coercion, the alienative universalism of capitalism produces an actor who is coerced in his productive activity. Creative activity, which is intrinsic to man's nature, becomes externalised as an alien force - it becomes extraneous to man's actual existence within capitalism. This is brought forth clearly in the following extract...29

"What constitutes the alienation of labour?....the worker feels himself only when he is not working: when he is working he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working and not at home when he is working. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but forced, it is forced labour."

The all-pervasive alienation of capitalism thus disintegrates the totality of existence creating a fundamental break between different types of creative activity and estranging e.g. domestic and industrial labour.

(b) While man's nature/potential dictates that he be a self-creative being i.e. in control of his history, in control of his creative powers, alienation inverts the relationship between man as producer and the product of his activity. In genuinely human creativity the object of labour depends upon the creativity of the producer, whereas alienation produces a process where human labour appears to depend on the product. Products within capitalism (commodities - goods for sale within a market) appear to dominate producers. Hence...30

"....This fact simply means that the object that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is labour embodied and made material in the object, it is the objectification of labour. The realisation of labour is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy this realisation of labour appears as a loss of reality for the worker, objectification as loss of and bondage to the object, and appropriation as..... alienation."

(c) While the actor required in Marx's revolutionary vision of man is seen as a truly social being; one who is oriented (is conscious of and responsive to self's relation to other), the negativity of alienation transform's man's social being (an end in itself) as a producer into a mere means of individual survival. Man's communality is thus threatened through the specifically negative universality of alienated labour in capitalism. This theme is dealt with in greatest depth in the section entitled 'Fetishism of Commodities' in 'Capital'. Here we see that the system of commodity production in capitalism creates the semblance of an inversion - man's social relationships appear as relationships between things (commodities) and relationships between things appear as social relationships. Consider the following extract....31

"A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of the labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between them, but between the products of their labour. There is a definite

social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.....This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities."

The production of commodities in capitalism inverts the social nature of man's productive labour in a variety of ways. Out of 'live' labour (human production or 'objectification') it creates 'dead' labour (commodities or exchange values); out of concrete labour it creates an abstraction.

(d) While the actor required by Marx's conception of revolution is seen as a whole, integrated or universal being, the alienative character of capitalist, negative universality disintegrates man's comprehensive productive capabilities. The agency which achieves the end of stunting man's all-round capabilities is the division of labour within capitalism. A highly developed division of labour creates a system where....32

"Each man had a particular, exclusive, sphere of activity, which is forced upon him, and from which he cannot escape."

So instead of encouraging man to develop his several talents in an integral way, the negativity of alienation represses this wholeness, creating a 'detail-worker' ie fragmenting man's totality as a being. Thus, each dimension of human capacity is

developed in isolation, and functions which belong together become estranged, eg mental and manual labour. *

The history of alienation is thus the history of man's estrangement from his social (universal) essence. In every class society man's productive powers are directed not to attaining the ends of all men, but only the particular ends of a ruling class within society.

Having been largely concerned with the question of 'the whole man' in revolution, we must now ask how the turn of 'the whole man' is to be achieved - what is the motive power for the turn. What we are now asking is, what is the character of the decisive intervention which is the only movement which can achieve the turn of the whole man? Specifically, we are interested in questions such as, how is the negativity of alienation to be negated, or how is the negative universality of capitalism to be forcefully transformed into the positive universality of socialism?

* For an extended discussion of this aspect of alienation see Sohn-Rethel, A. 'Intellectual and Manual Labour'.

Marx names the mode of forceful intervention as dialectic. * Dialectic connotes the movement necessary to make a real (genuine) change rather than a merely superficial change in the world. 'The world' as conceived of by Marx is composed of two relevant entities...33

"....man and his labour on one side, nature and its materials on the other."

Nature is often described by Marx as 'sensuous' thus alerting us to the point that nature offers up the possibility of mediation, of human intervention. Man's labour, says Marx, 'humanises' nature. However we must move from abstraction to consideration of man's relationship to nature in its specific, concrete manifestation. As we have seen, by consideration of the 'Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts', etc., man's relationship to nature in all pre-socialist societies has been an alienative one, ie negative or inverted in that nature has appeared to control man, rather than vice versa. Now this is true even in a society (capitalism) which develops man's productive powers (his

* There are, inevitably, (since this idea is fundamental to an understanding of Marx) many commentaries on Marx's concept of dialectic. Those which have been of greatest importance for this discussion are; Schmidt, A. 'Concept of Nature in Marx' especially parts 1 and 3; Marcuse 'Reason and Revolution' part 2; Blum, 'The Corpus of Knowledge' and Colletti, L. 'Marxism and The Dialectic' in 'New Left Review' Vol. 93 (1975).

work on nature) to unprecedented levels. Liberation, or the negation of the negativity of an alienated relationship to nature can only be achieved dialectically.

We must now face directly the question of what kind of work, or labour, what kind of movement is implied in dialectic. The dialectic is a mode of orientation to principle in the sense that it exemplifies orientation to the ongoing possibility of man's realisation of his universal nature in the world. In short, dialectic is the movement which is oriented to the realisation of man's essence. How does dialectic make possible this form of realisation? What kind of reality is realisable through the motion of dialectic? Marcuse has the following to say concerning dialectic.....34

"The historical character of the Marxian dialectic embraces the prevailing negativity as well as its negation. The given state of affairs is negative and can only be rendered positive by liberating the possibilities immanent in it."

Consider the 'prevailing negativity' as the environment (material, political, economic, etc.) within which men currently exist. However the factuality - the concrete existence of this environment in one way or another - is not to be confused with its reality. The factuality of an environment is negative - a contradiction which conceals beneath it a potential to which dialectic movement is engaged. In other words dialectical thought, in conceiving of history as a movement of negation, makes a fundamental distinction between appearance (the

empirically correct, factually accurate description of man in his environment, eg an empirically accurate description of the movement of prices in a market economic system) and the reality or potential inherent in human essence as it is embodied in any particular situation. Dialectics, then, is a movement which violates or subverts appearance in the service of the realisation of man's potential. The aim of dialectical intervention, then, is to bring forward the positive (potential) latent within the negative, ie a complete turn or revolution.

What does it mean, then, to say that dialectic names a principled (engaged) conception of man's development, such that the negativity of appearance can be subverted to forward its positive potential? To begin to answer this question we have to focus upon what it means to say that what the revolutionary manifests is an engaged concept of man in relation to his environment. A principled conception of revolution acknowledges that revolutions are not possible at any or all periods, nor in any or all environments, ie that revolution has a place. In so doing the revolutionary conception of man's relation to his environment conceives of changes in that relationship (of history) as having a specific character. Consider the following well known quotation....35

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, giving and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."

The real meaning of this statement is that man must recognise that his orientation to his environment must take cognizance of the point that environments offer both opportunities (potential) and resistances to the development of that potential. An engaged concept of revolution shows its consciousness of the force of both opportunities, positive latencies and of resistances. Thus a principled, engaged conception of man's relation to his environment recognises the difference between favourable conditions for a revolution and unfavourable conditions. While attempting to transform (the potential of) unfavourable circumstances into favourable, his violation of these circumstances recognises their power.

Furthermore, since the socialist revolution orients to universality the socialist revolutionary looks not just at favourable conditions for a revolution in his society, but the consequences of the timing of his revolution as a (favourable or unfavourable, timely or premature) condition of world revolution. This is an important point which we shall return to repeatedly.

We can now see that a principled conception of revolution (one which is oriented to the distinctions implied in our reading of

Marx) could see the difference between an engaged and an unengaged, or abstract, version of revolution.

A failure to be engaged - a disembodiment or dislocation of principle - is the problem of abstraction, most commonly manifested by the Utopian. For Marx Utopians display their un-engaged version of revolution as a concept of revolution which exists 'only in the head' ie theorising which is content to remain abstract or cannot transform its abstraction and become engaged or focussed upon the specificity of the world it is seeking to revolutionise. For Marx one of the main exemplars of Utopianism of this kind was Bakunin, of whom he says.....36

"But there the innermost thought of Mr. Bakunin comes to light. He does not understand a thing about social revolution, only the political phrases about it; its economic conditions do not exist for him. Now since all hitherto existing economic forms, developed or undeveloped, include the servitude of the worker (be it in the form of wage worker, peasant, etc.) he believes that in all of the a radical revolution is equally possible. But even more! He wants the European social revolution, founded on the economic basis of capitalist production, to take place at the level of the Russian or Slav agricultural and pastoral people. Will, not economic conditions, is the foundation of his social revolution."

This characteristically acid statement on Bakunin nonetheless reveals a great deal about Marx's conception of the difference between a principled, or engaged conception of revolution and an abstract, unprincipled conception. There are a number of distinctions referred to here which will be analysed later, eg

that the revolution is 'social' and not merely political (discussed in the next chapter with respect to the French Revolution) and the distinction between speech (phrases about revolution) and language (the principle of revolution). For the purposes of the present discussion this passage tells us that abstracted, disengaged revolutionary theorising violates the specificity of man's relationship to his environment. The utopian inhabits a featureless environment - a revolution is achievable at any time, in any society. Utopian man is one-dimensional in the sense that all he has is desires - 'Will'. In short the abstracted utopian has unmoderated desires - unmoderated in the sense that his conception of desire is disengaged from the resistance of the environment. For the utopian, man exists in a featureless environment, where opportunity exists but resistance does not. The unengaged concept of revolution thus has no respect for the distinction between man - conceived of as someone who has to labour (against resistances) to enact his will, and god - who can enact his wishes. The utopian thus respects spontaneity - pure action of desire while the principled revolutionary respects decisive (timely) action. Thus utopians are unengaged to the extent that they see no need to orient to environment. Another way of putting this is to say that the utopian forgets (wishes away) the necessity of relating self to other. The labour of engagement, of the turn, cannot be generated by the utopian who relies

instead upon 'spontaneity', the pure (disengaged from other) self. *

Dialectic as engagement actively identifies the positive potential of man's relationship to specific environments. As we have seen, in capitalist society man's relationship to his environment is negative (alienative) on a factual level. Dialectical engagement seeks to negate this negativity through transforming the positive potential latent within or beneath its negative appearance. Now in order to restrain the temptation towards abstraction we can ask - how does this mode of analysis manifest itself in specific terms within Marx's theorising?

The first important aspect of a dialectical intervention is a general point concerning the potential of capitalist society as a whole. Since the system of production within capitalism creates a universality of dependence, as this system spreads and reaches its highest stages of development, any future socialist revolution must free all men together. In other words the development of capitalism itself - the creation of (albeit

* This concern is taken up in the chapter on Lenin. 'Spontaneity' as an overriding concern is something which links utopian, anarchist and terrorist versions of revolution.

alienated forms of) interdependence - produces conditions which offer the possibility of a revolution which would be qualitatively different from all previous revolutions. The social agency which can produce this intervention is the proletariat 37

"In all revolutions up till now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was a question of a different distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labour to other persons, whilst communist revolution is directed against the preceding mode of activity, does away with labour, and abolishes the rule of all classes with the classes themselves, because it is carried through by the class which no longer counts as a class in society, is not recognised as a class, and is in itself the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities, etc. within present society; and both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."

The proletariat, then, is unique in the sense that it is the first class of 'a universal significance' - the first class which will not just throw off the oppression of one ruling class but all ruling classes - the 'muck of ages'. This is the first and basic sense in which the prior conditions for a transformation of capitalism are created by capitalism itself.

What it means to say that dialectic is a movement of negation is that dialectical movement identifies potential within negative (alienative) conditions and negates the superficial negativity of conditions by activating their positive inner core. Since capitalism is a system based upon a fundamental and irreconcilable contradiction (between capitalist and proletarian, between 'dead labour' - Capital and 'live labour' - Labour) the more alienation develops - the greater capitalism develops - the further the potential immanent within the system offers up favourable (positive) conditions for revolution. This is the real sense of the phrase in "The Communist Manifesto" that "What the bourgeoisie produces above all is its own grave-diggers". Thus as alienation reaches its apex within capitalism 'ensnaring' everyone within the world market - producing universal dependence, dialectical intervention generates the possibility of transforming this dependence into mutual inter-dependence.

If capitalism creates its own grave-diggers, then we must ask what are the positive elements of negative or alienated relationships which are the 'transitional forms' that dialectical intervention can transform? Throughout his work Marx refers to the growing (albeit forced) interdependence of labour within capitalism as the 'socialisation' of production relationships. This discussion is most fully developed in two works, "The Grundrisse" and "Capital", where Marx identifies two transitional forms - the Joint Stock Company and the Worker Co-operative as

embryonic socialist forms within capitalism. Thus there is a definite revolution implied in property relationships from individual private property through capitalist private property to communal property. This movement is clearly a developing universalisation of property relationships.

Let us deal firstly with the joint-stock company, which Marx describes as a 'transformation of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production'. This transitional form transforms....38

"the actual functioning capitalist into a mere manager, administrator of other people's capital, and of the owner of the capital into a mere owner, a mere money-capitalist. Even if the dividends which they receive include the interest and profit of enterprise, ie the total profit (for the salary of the manager is, or should be, simply the wage of a specific type of skilled labour, whose price is regulated in the labour market like that of any other labour), this total profit is henceforth received only in the form of interest, ie as mere compensation for owning capital that now is entirely divorced from the function in the actual process of reproduction, just as the function of the person of the manager is divorced from ownership of capital. This result of the ultimate development of capitalist production is a necessary transitional phase towards the reconversion of capital into the property of producers, although no longer as the private property of the individual producers, but rather as the property of associated producers, as outright social property."

So the early capitalist owner-manager becomes a 'mere owner' in advanced capitalism, the separation of ownership from control being the main consequence of the joint-stock companies' growth.

The crucial issue for us is that this represents a further development of the drive towards universalisation created by alienation within capitalism. In the later stages of capitalistic development, not only does the proletariat experience alienation 'in concentrated form' but so too does the capitalist, estranged from control over what it is that defines his existence - his capital.

The second example of a 'transitional form' exhibiting revolutionary potential is the worker co-operative. Marx lauds the co-operative form as 'a great social experiment' as one which has shown that, 'production on a large scale.....may be carried out without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of bonds'. We are, however, now faced with a problem. Some might interpret Marx in a rule-bound way here. Some might argue that this analysis presents a view of revolution being governed by a set of inflexible rules which postulate that socialism is an inexorable, spontaneous, natural outcome of capitalism. This version is however at variance with the essence of Marx's theorising. In contradistinction to the version of revolution as conforming to rule, we see Marx as providing a version of revolution as orientation to principle. These transitional forms do not automatically produce socialist forms. The process of movement named revolution requires a decisive intervention, rather than the smooth continuity produced in the rule-bound version. Decisive intervention displays its commitment to principle in its recognition that transitional forms display not

just the mark of the future, but also of the (distorted) present ie that they too require transformation. There is no inevitability about worker co-operatives automatically producing socialist (universal) relations of production since....39

"At the same time, the experience of the period from 1848 to 1864 has proved beyond doubt that, however excellent in principle, and however useful in practice, co-operative labour, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even to perceptibly lighten the burden of their miseries."

and furthermore.....40

"The co-operative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first sprouts of the new, although they naturally reproduce, everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcomings of the prevailing system. But the antithesis between capital and labour is overcome (aufgehoben) within them, if at first only by way of making the associated labourers into their own capitalist, ie by enabling them to use the means of production for the employment of their own labour."

Thus left to develop on their own (without decisive intervention) co-operatives would reflect the alienated conditions within which they grew. Only revolutionary guidance can transform the co-operatives from localised, nationally based organisations, from one-sided private producers into universal associated producers. Transitional forms have no internal linear logic, their potential requires the application of authoritative (principled) action for their positive development. If, as Marx

asserts, socialism must emerge 'out of the womb of capitalism' we can see that the principled, dialectical version of revolution requires the action of a midwife. The revolutionary actor is best understood as the Socratic * theorist par excellence.

Some (especially those adhering to the rule-bound conception of revolution) might argue against the appropriateness of the analogy with midwifery arguing that birth is a 'natural' process which does not require the agency of midwifery. We can counter that the art of the midwife (timely and authoritative intervention in the development and birth of a child) is highly appropriate to the revolutionary. Midwifery ensures a concern not just for the survival of a child (as in the case of classical midwifery - Maieutics - survival is not a blind requirement of the midwife - the midwife was charged, in certain circumstances, with ensuring that the child did not survive) but in its positive development, ie midwifery displays a moral commitment rather than a mere technical orientation.

* For a discussion of the dialectician as midwife see Socrates 'Theatetus'.

CHAPTER 2

Section I

In seeking to deepen our analysis of Marx's concept of revolution we can investigate the way in which that concept is developed in relation to three revolutions - namely the French Revolution of 1789, the 'failed' European revolutions of 1848, and finally the 'coming' socialist revolution of the future.

For Marx, the importance of the French Revolution lies in what it tells us about the possibilities (the strengths and weaknesses, above all the limits) of a particular politically-based revolution. What is significant about the French Revolution is that it is based upon a unique contradiction. On the one hand this revolution is based upon an appeal to universal ideals ('liberty', 'equality', etc. for all) yet on the other it creates a society in which this universalism is unattainable ie although it is now possible for anyone regardless of birth to become a bourgeois, capitalist society requires that not everyone will become a bourgeois. 1 Thus while the French Revolution creates some of the necessary conditions for socialism, (eg the sweeping away of particularistic criteria of social selection - the 'accident of birth') the fact that its universality is strictly limited to the political sphere ensures that it cannot be used as a model for socialist revolution.

The real lesson of the French Revolution, then, is that a socialist (universal) revolution is not possible within the limiting conditions of a (partial) bourgeois revolution. Any attempt to induce or force through a socialist revolution in these conditions by purely political means, ie as the Jacobins attempted in the French Revolution, will result in a counter-productive reign of terror. Jacobin terror is fundamentally partial rather than universal in the sense that it ignores the absence of the all-round development of man (ie not just in the political, but also in the social, economic, etc. spheres) as a necessary pre-condition for a successful revolution, ie successful in the sense of faithful to its principles. Marx is unreservedly critical of Jacobinism to the extent that the reversion to terror is tantamount to the attempt to impose a political order in a situation where the social conditions for the development of that order have not yet been created. Terror, then, is something which is abstract - abstracted from specific conditions - rather than engaged.

The lesson of the negativity of terror is applied equally to the 'failed' revolutions of 1848² and the Paris Commune of 1871.

3 His comments upon the 1848 revolution are particularly illuminating. Here Marx criticises both the French Blancists and the followers of the German insurrectionist Heber, both of whom commit Jacobin errors. In each case a restriction of struggle to political activity and, ultimately, terror is an admission of defeat.

Perhaps the difference between Jacobin/Blancists and Marx, or between terrorism and revolution is best exemplified in the following quotation which inaugurated a split in the League of Communists in 1850. It shows quite clearly that Marx learned quite a different lesson from the 'failures' of 1848 to the Jacobins (in this case the Willich-Schapper faction). 4

'Instead of the universal view of the Manifesto there comes the German one, and the national feelings of the German artisan are being flattered. Instead of the real conditions they point to the will as the major factor in the revolution.

While we tell the workers: "You have to endure and go through 15, 20, 50 years of civil war in order to change the circumstances, in order to make yourselves fit for power" - instead of that, you say: "We must come to power immediately, or otherwise we may just as well go to sleep.'

This is an important statement and deserves detailed consideration. What can we learn from it?

Firstly, that for Marx the revolution must be universal, and not restricted to a material revolution, no matter how 'advanced' the German proletariat may have been. Secondly, terrorism relies upon spontaneity, upon immediate action, it demands the revolution now, irrespective of conditions. Thirdly, and most importantly in contradistinction to immediacy and spontaneity the revolutionary is prepared to take the risk of advising the proletariat that, 'You have to endure and to through 15, 20, 50 years of civil war to make yourselves fit for power'. In other

words, for the terrorist the proletariat needs no preparation for producing a revolution, while for Marx the proletariat has to suffer and learn (to move from 'one-sidedness' to an 'all-round', or universal development) before a revolution is possible. The abstraction of terrorism is likely to lead to premature action (action which is not cognizant or engaged with social as opposed to purely political conditions). Furthermore premature action is not to be confused with decisive intervention, since decisive intervention can lead to a turn of the whole (man or society) whereas premature action is self-limited and partial.

Organised terrorism of the Jacobin kind is essentially a clandestine or conspiratorial view of change. Hence in relation to the German Jacobin he asserts 5

'Their business lies precisely in trying to pre-empt the developing revolutionary process, drive it artificially to crisis, to create a revolution ex nihilo, to make a revolution without the conditions of a revolution. For them, the only necessary condition for a revolution is an adequate organisation of their conspiracy. They are the alchemists of the revolution, and they share all the woolly-mindedness, follies, and idées fixes of the former alchemists. They throw themselves on discoveries which should work revolutionary wonders: incendiary bombs, heel-machines of magical impact, émeutes which ought to be the more wonder-working and sudden the less they have any rational ground. Always busy and preoccupied with such absurd planning and conniving, they see no other end than the next toppling-over of the existing government. Hence their deepest disdain for the more theoretical enlightenment of the workers about their class-interests. Hence their not proletarian, but rather plebeian, anger at those gentlemen in black coats (habits noirs), the more or less educated people, who

represent this side of the movement, and from whom they never manage to free themselves wholly as the official representatives of the party.'

Conspiracy tends to degenerate into terror because of its political partiality. Instead of engaging self with other - the work of the revolutionary dialectician engaging with the proletariat - the conspirators are limited to self ie their own clique. Their limitation to the (internal) political also leads to a disdain for intellectuals (see Lenin chapter) since for Jacobins, the proletariat require no development, education or preparation for siezing power.



Section II

The version of Marx's concept of revolution presented here, revolution as orientation to principle, is at variance with many other readings of Marx, notably that which I have referred to as producing a version of revolution as conformity to rule. Now there is one 'alternative' reading of Marx which must be faced squarely. This is the reading of Hannah Arendt. * Her text is highly articulate and one which has been, ironically, much ignored. 6 A particular reason for making a detailed excursion is that she, like the current writer, claims an affinity with the ancients, even though her definition excludes all revolutions before 1776.

Arendt's argument is straightforward. Politics is an eternal struggle between freedom and tyranny (or necessity). What distinguishes all revolutions is the struggle for freedom. We might note, in passing, that Arendt rightly distinguishes between freedom and civil liberty. Freedom is greater than the mere presence of civil rights which simply requires the absence of

* Arendt, H. 'On Revolution' Penguin 1973.

tyranny and despotism rather than the freedom implicit in the right 'to participate in the public sphere - a right first enjoyed in the ancient Greek city-state or 'polis'. Freedom, then, is a positive idea which is quite different to the negative idea of the preservation of civil liberties against a government which has infringed upon these rights.

Arendt argues that modern revolutions (she has in mind especially the Russian and all post-Russian revolutions) have degenerated in that they have lost sight of their inspiration (freedom) and become tyrannies dominated by doctrines of necessity. This degeneration is traced to the 'failure' of the French Revolution, and in particular to the lessons that were drawn from it. The principal architect of the degeneration, according to Arendt, was Marx. The following quotation from Arendt illustrates one facet of her attitude to him. 7

'...he finally strengthened more than anybody else the politically most pernicious doctrine of the modern age, namely that life is the highest good. Thus the role of revolution was no longer to liberate men from the oppression of their fellow men, let alone to found freedom, but to liberate the life process of society from the fetters of scarcity so that it could swell into a stream of abundance. Not freedom but abundance became now the aim of revolution.'

Clearly Arendt sees Marx's vision of liberation as being a limited, one-dimensional view restricting revolution to an economic transformation of the material productive powers. Now this view is certainly a curious one, since capitalism itself is capable of developing the productivity of man's economic powers

to unprecedented levels 8 as Marx himself acknowledges. The distinction between capitalism and socialism in Marx is not in terms of the aggregate amount that each can squeeze out of the economy (scarcity versus abundance), since no matter how powerful man's economic powers, man's economic capacity is only a partial aspect of his all-round or universal capacities. The distinction between the two (capitalism and socialism) is between an alienated, negative, partial development of man's capacities and an all-round universal development of his (more than economic) powers. The question Marx was interested in was the universality of man as it is realised in revolution. This is a question of human value rather than aggregate value, of quality rather than quantity; it refers to the good of labour itself, whether labour is free or coerced, realises repressive or liberatory ends etc.

Furthermore Arendt has the following observations to offer...9

'It was the scientist in Marx, and the ambition to raise his 'science' to the rank of natural science, whose chief category then was still necessity, that tempted him into the reversal of his own categories. Politically this development led Marx into an actual surrender of freedom to necessity. He did what his teacher in revolution, Robespierre, had done before him and what his greatest disciple, Lenin, was to do after him in the most momentous revolution his teachings have yet inspired.'

Arendt here is making the same distinction (between the philosopher, 'early' Marx who was interested in freedom and the 'later', scientific, Marx, fixated on necessity) that we earlier argued was characteristic of those who produced a version of

revolution as conforming to rule. According to Arendt there is no difference between Robespierre, Marx and Lenin in the lessons that they learned from the French Revolution, ie that all abandoned freedom in favour of necessity as the guiding force of revolution. Now I have sought to demonstrate that Marx learned quite different lessons from the French Revolution to those attributed to him by Arendt. Arendt equates Robespierre with Marx, though as I have shown, Marx rejected Robespierre, Jacobinism, terrorism as conspiracy as models of the revolutionary actor. A view of Marx understanding revolution as conforming to rule (necessity) would be quite compatible with an equation of him with Robespierre (the relation of Lenin to Marx I leave to the next chapter). On the other hand, a view of revolution as orientation to principle with an underlying view of revolution serving the attainment of man's universal, creative nature rather than conforming to rule of partial/alienated economic powers produces nothing of the sort.

So far we have concentrated on Arendt's reading of Marx, but what of her concept of revolution? The first point to make is that for her revolution refers exclusively to the political sphere of man's existence. For Marx, as we have seen, a socialist revolution is universal in its implication. In the view of Arendt, indeed, it is revolution's contamination with what she sees as extra-political issues, ie social and economic issues, which brings about the downfall of modern revolution. "The Social Question" in Arendt refers to one issue, ie mass poverty.

10 Poverty dooms the zeal for freedom in the sense that the poor are 'determined by necessity' and hence, in Arendt's terms inappropriate agents of revolution. We can now see why it is that Arendt expresses such a strong preference for the American over the French Revolution. In the American revolution, the rulers of America were largely unencumbered by mass poverty. Hence Arendt makes the following observation. 11

"The sad truth of the matter is that the French Revolution which ended in disaster, has made world history, while the American Revolution, so triumphantly successful, has remained an event of little more than local importance."

Now it is indeed original to note that, even amongst North American intellectuals, the American Revolution is overshadowed by the French Revolution, and indeed this may imply an important lacuna in modernism. However we must inquire further into what are the implications of this judgement of success and failure. In a concept of revolution as orientation to principle, a judgement of success can only mean - faithfulness to principle. A revolution is successful only insofar as it embodies the principle of which it is an expression. If revolution is seen as rule-bound, as expressing conformity to rule, success can mean the creation and survival of a state of affairs. Now we must be extremely cautious about the 'triumphant success' of the American Revolution when Arendt admits that the American Revolution has declined because of....12

'...the fatal passion for sudden riches.'

So how can we understand this 'success' in the light of the

corruption of the principles of the republic by 'material desires' - the 'fatal passion'? Arendt goes on to argue....13

"Had Robespierre lived to watch the development of the new government of the United States, where the revolution....succeeded precisely where the French Revolution failed, namely in the task of foundation."

Thus 'unsurpassed success' means the creation and survival of an enduring republic which manages to preserve 'civil liberties' - though not the higher principle of freedom (which Arendt acknowledges, as I have argued, is much more than those liberties which simply guarantee, something which is important - the absence of tyranny - but no more). Failure - as in the French case - means the failure to establish an enduring republic - a state - with the advent of the Bourbons. Hence, despite the undoubted insights of her analysis, Arendt produces a version of revolution as conforming to rule.

Perhaps this reading is too harsh upon Arendt. Is she really blind to principle? A better reading of Arendt would recognise that she is not interested per se in revolution - she is only concerned with revolution insofar as it relates to her real interests which are the origins of war, violence and tyranny. By abandoning freedom for necessity, Arendt argues, the modern view of revolution begets violence, terror and war, ultimately tyranny. There is a continuum of necessity between revolution, violence, war and tyranny. Indeed Arendt begins her analysis 14 by concurring with Lenin that the 20th century has been a century

of both wars and revolutions. The modernist conception, according to Arendt, stands in opposition to the classical version of politics. Of this alternative she has the following to say.....15

'....the conviction that political relations in their normal course do not fall under the sway of violence, and this conviction we find for the first time in Greek antiquity, in so far as the Greek polis, the city-state, defined itself explicitly as a way of life that was based exclusively upon persuasion and not upon violence.'

Arendt thus externalises war from politics, sees it as basically inimical to a good state.

Now there are a number of important relationships raised but not thoroughly investigated in Arendt. Firstly there is the relationship between violence and terror. As we have sought to demonstrate, for Marx there is a fundamental difference between violence and terror. This distinction is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter on Lenin. Suffice it to say that, in Arendt, violence and terror are, if not wholly interchangeable, certainly part of the same cycle. Secondly consider the relationship of war to politics and revolution. Again, for Arendt, there is an iron consistency between war and violence on the one hand and revolution on the other, even though theoretically and practically they may be distinguished. Hence...16

'...we must not fail to note that the mere fact that revolutions and wars are not even conceivable outside the domain of violence is enough to set them both apart from all other political phenomena. It would be difficult to deny that one of the reasons why wars have turned so easily into revolutions and why revolutions have shown this ominous inclination to unleash wars is that violence is a kind of common denominator for both.'

Now what allows Arendt to see a rule-bound and linear connection between violence and terror is that she has an abstracted conception (or an absolute conception) of the virtue of freedom. However, is this not to violate the ancients? Freedom exists not as an isolated virtue, but as a virtue in relation to other virtues. For example, is justice not a virtue with which the ancients were concerned when considering the composition of the ideal state? * An absolute conception of the virtue of freedom ironically turns freedom into a despotic virtue, repressing other virtues. In recognising the existence and importance of other virtues we need not negate freedom nor ignore its goodness. What is important is to see that freedom has a place (it is not the only virtue) in relation to others.

* No-one could read Plato's 'Republic' for instance and argue against this contention.

If we admit of justice as a virtue, then we have to recognise what Arendt fails to; that it is possible to conceive of a just war. If we are correct in asserting that justice as well as freedom were seen as virtues in the Greek state, then the question of a just war does become less than absurd, less than irrational. Indeed the Greeks did conceive of a just war - the Persian Wars. * To make this kind of a judgement is a blasphemy to Arendt - there is simply no such thing as a justified war for her, as the following makes apparent.....17

"Perhaps it is because of this noticeable absence of the freedom argument from the traditional justifications of war as the last resort of international politics that we have this curiously jarring sentiment whenever we hear it introduced into the debate of the war question today. To sound off with a cheerful 'give me liberty or give me death' sort of argument in the face of the unprecedented and inconceivable potential of destruction in nuclear warfare is not even hollow; it is downright ridiculous."

While we may agree with Arendt, here, to the extent that most wars are immoral and modern warfare doubly so, this does not mean that all wars are unjust.

* This point is conceded by Arendt - "On Revolution" p.12. However she argues that even this war is to be regarded as extra-political since it did not concern the internal governance of the city-states.

The problem with Arendt's view of revolution is that it is partial and tends towards abstraction. Partial in a number of senses. Firstly in that she makes us choose freedom to the exclusion of all other virtues. Secondly in that she sees politics in a particular way. Essentially politics for her is an internal feature of the governance of individual states. We are faced with a choice between individual states and individual revolutions - Greece versus Rome, the American versus French Revolution, etc. Thirdly in the estrangement of the political questions from the social questions. This partial version of revolution is at variance with the universal conception of revolution we have been considering and would be unlikely to find favour in Marx.

In Arendt revolutions are unlikely to succeed, except in individual societies unencumbered by the 'social question' or mass poverty, eg the United States. For Marx, 'socialism in one county' is incompatible with the view that the revolution serves to realise man's nature - it is a one-sided concept. Furthermore, he would argue that one cannot see the absence of poverty (a crucial criterion for the success of a revolution in Arendt) in one nation in isolation from its presence in another. The universality of the market in modern capitalism creates a forced interdependence, where the affluence of the Western world is dependent upon the poverty of the third world.

There are, however, important points of contact between Marx and Arendt. Neither underestimates the difficulties of a successful revolution, and each is aware of the possibilities of revolution degenerating into its extremes. Arendt has the following to say concerning this problem.....18

"Though the whole record of past revolutions demonstrates beyond doubt that every attempt to solve the social question with political means leads into terror, and that is is terror which sends revolutions to their doom, it can hardly be denied that to avoid this fatal mistake is almost impossible when a revolution breaks out under conditions of mass poverty."

Marx would agree that 'terror sends revolutions to their doom', yet would argue that terror is not inevitable. Furthermore, as we have seen in his arguments with the Jacobins (Willich-Schapler factor for example) of his time, he was aware that premature action - revolution under 'conditions of mass poverty'- could also send a revolution to its doom.

The distinction between Arendt and Marx is only glimpsed at if we say that one views revolution as a partial and the other as a universal concept. Both Arendt and Marx are aware of the difficulties surrounding revolution. However in Arendt this is focussed upon the exclusive virtue, or the dominance as a virtue, of freedom. In Marx freedom and justice are not mutually incompatible.

Section III

The argument that, while Marx produced a richly detailed analysis of capitalist society, he had little definite to say of communist society is a commonplace of many reviews of Marx's work. Now if this means he did not provide rules for the production of socialist society, or norms to which behaviour should conform in socialist society, then there is some truth to this argument. Indeed Marx argues that he would refuse to....¹⁹

"...write recipes for the cook-shops of the future"

However, we have argued that Marx does not provide an understanding of revolution as conformity to rule, but on the contrary as orientation to principle. Perhaps we can understand this better by arguing that Marx was not (what the modernists consider as a version of someone who has something to say of the future) a futurologist. The futurologist produces a rule-bound conception of the future, which generates certain lawful methods for extrapolating current trends into the future. This violates Marx's view since it has no room for the turn, no room for what is novel - genuinely new in revolution. It is not continuity but discontinuity which distinguishes revolution. What he does furnish us with is a vision of the realisation of a principle. This vision tells a story of the potential realisation of man's essence. Rather than being a disengaged or Utopian vision,

Marx's vision investigates the possibility of orienting to the development of man's universal nature in any given situation.

Marx's vision is therefore engaged in the sense that it requires that one relates to 'real' conditions in the service of realising a principle. However this is quite a different matter to arguing that in Marx conditions automatically produce a revolution (a rule-bound reading of Marx, similar to that of Arendt's where 'necessity' is what produces Marx's view of revolution). Conditions are important (they provide favourable or unfavourable opportunities for revolutionary action, for example), but in the principled account they are not crucial. Marx's principled account is an active one in the sense that revolution requires that conditions be galvanised, the opportunities which they provide be siezed upon and directed by conscious, free and active individuals with a socialist vision. We may recall here our earlier discussion which argued that Marx saw free activity as an integral feature of man's universal essence. His view of the revolution is thus active rather than passive. Furthermore, he sees revolution as engaged, not in the sense that it simply creates a new set of conditions (a new state), since the objective is not just new conditions (a reified conception of socialist society) but the creation of freely associating, universal individuals. This question is referred to in the following extract....20

"One must above all avoid setting 'the society' up as an abstraction opposed to the individual. The individual is the social entity. The expression of his life....is therefore an expression of the life of society."

The free individual is therefore at the heart of Marx's analysis. So much for the commonly held view of 'an absence of a theory of the individual in Marx'. 21

Abstracted views of man see individual and society as disconnected, producing 'individualistic' or 'collectivistic' views of man. Marx sees the two, individual and society, reconciled in his vision of the universal individual.

The dialectical motive power for the push from capitalism is not, then, blind 'objective' conditions, though these are important, but the development of a revolutionary class - the embryonic model of the universal individual. Since the universal individual is at the same time a free and conscious actor - it is not just the appropriateness of material conditions which make for a revolutionary situation - but the decisive development of (self)consciousness amongst the proletariat. Marcuse is keenly sensitive to this point when he argues....22

"The revolution requires the maturity of many forces, but the greatest force is the subjective force, namely the revolutionary class itself."

Thus the revolution can only come about through the authorisation

of a proletariat which is self-conscious, self-responsible and grown to adulthood. When Marx talks of the transition of the proletariat from being 'a class in itself' to 'a class for itself' he is naming the revolutionary process of the proletariat's education. For a revolution to be successful the proletariat has to move from ignorance (of itself) - mere being - to knowledge of itself or to become self-responsible.

The requirement of a revolutionary consciousness among the proletariat has definite consequences for a principled conception of revolution. If socialist society is to be transformed out of capitalist society, then amongst other requirements....

1. A proletariat must be constituted in itself, ie there is an identifiable capitalist social structure with a proletariat (rather than, for example, a peasantry) as its largest element.

2. Through a period of class struggle, involving sacrifice, the proletariat develops a mature consciousness of itself as a class.

It is important to note, then, that any attempt to create a revolution before these forces have been created is likely to be premature action, even when superficially conditions appear propitious. As we have seen before, Marx does not see the proletariat (even where it is a class 'in itself') as automatically 'fit' for rule. To be 'fit' for rule the proletariat has to undergo a process of educative

self-transformation. For our reading, what is really decisive is not so much the 'factual' existence of the proletariat even though this is a 'sine qua non', as the extent to which that proletariat is self-conscious and mature. Our view is in strict contrast to the post-Marx debates of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin on the proletariat in the Russian Revolution where these theorists concentrate almost exclusively on the 'factual' questions, eg in Trotsky's case great store is placed upon the proportion of the population which was proletarianised in the rapid period of industrialisation immediately prior to the October revolution.

A further important divergence between rule-bound and orientation to principle readings of Marx relate to how we are to interpret Marx's changes of mind concerning the likely locale for the initial socialist revolution. At various stages Marx considered France, England, Germany and Russia as possible or even probable host societies for the first revolution. In a rule-bound reading these changes of mind create fundamental problems. Lack of predictive power implies inaccurate rules for the production of a revolution. Accurate forecasting is essential to the futurologist and 'failure' here looks like vacillation, or the absence of good rules. 23 More generous pro-Marx readings within the rule-bound tradition 24 see the earlier vacillations leading to an intellectual break where the later work produces good rules (ie accurate predictions) for the production of a revolution.

While the rule-bound perspective sees nothing but difference and lack of unity in Marx's theorising on the first socialist revolution, the principled view sees a deeper unity underlying the superficial 'changes of mind' concerning the location of the first revolution. We are not saying that Marx does not change, or learn anything from these changes of mind. What we are saying is that each change of mind indicates development - learning something new - with respect to the way in which the principle of revolution can be embodied, ie each change implied a re-orientation to principle. While the vacillator in the rule-bound reading abandons principle, and is dazzled by the apparent opportunities of the immediate, Marx learns new ways to embody an enduring principle.

All of the foregoing can perhaps be best illuminated if we take two examples of a change of mind on this issue - France and Russia.

As we have already mentioned, Marx attributed the greatest importance to investigating the French Revolution and its demise. At several stages, especially in mid-nineteenth century, Marx considered that French society displayed revolutionary potential. However he always expressed reservations about this potential. In "The Class Struggle in France" he had the following to say in criticism of the leaders of French socialists....²⁵

"...they think that they would be able to consummate a proletarian revolution within the national walls of France, side by side with the remaining bourgeois nations."

The important point to be learnt from this is that the revolution - socialism - in one country is a nonsense to Marx. Now we have to go further and ask how can he reach this conclusion. If revolution is a process which is intended to orient to the principle of the realisation of man's universal essence, then this can only be done inter-nationally rather than nationally. The purely national seizure of power represents a one-sided change - a revolution requires an all-sided change. Thus we have the crucial lesson that any national revolution is doomed to failure (failure to realise the principle which inspires it) if it remains a national rather than an international movement - even in cases where the political edifice of the revolution survives, ie even where state power is maintained by a national proletariat. If revolutions are to serve the realisation of man's universal nature they must move beyond the bounds of a nation-state or collapse. Furthermore this is not a strategic point. Some might interpret Marx to be saying that a revolution can be crushed or threatened by the encirclement 26 of counter-revolutionary societies. Our reading evaluates the warning against national one-sidedness not in terms of rules (the correct tactics) but in terms of embodiment of principle.

The second example is that of Russia. His analysis here is clearly of the greatest importance, especially for our

understanding of Marx in relation to Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. It is frequently noted that, towards the end of his life, Marx turned his attention to the possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia. In support of this view, a passage from Marx's preface to the Russian edition of the "Communist Manifesto" is usually cited. It is worth considering this passage in some detail.....27

"If the Russian revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complete each other, then the present Russian system of community ownership of land could serve as the starting point for a communist development."

Now we have to be extremely careful to avoid making too quick an inference about this passage. What Marx is really addressing here is the relationship between two necessarily integrated moments in the revolutionary process, ie the relation between the universal (international) and particular (national) moments of that process. In the above quote Marx refers only to the revolution in the West as a proletarian revolution. He was well aware of the relative under-development of the Russian proletariat in relation to the peasantry. 28 The particular or national revolution (Russia) cannot produce a successful revolution (one which embodies the principle of socialism) unless it successfully links itself into (becomes a signal for) the universal (the international revolution).

A national revolution only makes sense, to Marx, if it can become generative of a push beyond the one-sided national boundaries

which threaten to limit it. A Russian revolution which occurs before the proletariat as a force is mature is a pre-mature revolution - ie it cannot embody principle universally. This possible prematurity has two aspects - there are two ways in which a Russian revolution could fail to be a timely or decisive intervention. Firstly, if the national proletariat of Russia was not sufficiently mature, self-conscious and developed, the revolution would inevitably stagnate and atrophy. Secondly, externally, a Russian revolution could be less than timely in relation to the development of the proletariats of Western Europe. Marx has attempted to show that timeliness is of the essence. In addition, he has attempted to demonstrate that the universalism of orientation to principle should be engaged (with the particularity of national conditions) rather than abstract.

Whilst the rule-bound conception of Marx sees his theorising on the first socialist revolution as indicative of fundamental differences in his works, we see these differences as surface features of a deeper unity. At different points in his work Marx evaluates the prospects of revolution in different societies. However these different locales are seen in terms of the extent to which they embody potential for the embodiment of a principle. Marx's story of revolution is thus a moral tale in the sense that it investigates the ongoing possibility of orienting to the realisation of man's genuine (universal) nature.

CHAPTER 3

Section I

The aim of this chapter and chapter four is to provide and analysis of the relationship of Lenin's theorising to that of Marx. In so doing we will be primarily concerned with the extent to which Lenin allows us to consolidate and advance the concept of revolution as orientation to a standard, or whether he violates this conception and regresses by reading Marx's conception of revolution as orientation to rule. This is clearly a complex goal, and one which is made no less straightforward by the blockages created in the works of certain leading interpreters of Lenin.

Those problems which might serve to deflect us from our primary aim are twofold.

Firstly, many interpretations create a cold war cloud which distorts Lenin's theorising. Thus much conventional interpretation of Lenin in the Soviet Union is little better than hagiography, converting Lenin into a god. As I shall argue below this represents a fundamental violation of Lenin's theorising which relied upon making explicit the distinction between man and

god, and advocates respect for that distinction. On the other hand much Western interpretation of Lenin suffers from being based upon what Meyer 1 calls.....

"a philosophy that is uncongenial to writers in our culture."

E. H. Carr is blunter, but probably closer to the truth, when he says that a state of 'moral blackmail' characterises the view of many western intellectual interpretations of Soviet writers. Just how much of a problem this is for serious consideration of Lenin can be gleaned by considering the works of Conquest, 2 regarded by some as a writer relatively untainted by cold-war pressures. However Conquest argues that the Russian revolution replaced one form of 'tyranny' by another, and that the Russian revolution achieved nothing that could not have been achieved by other, 'less repressive' means. (We may therefore feel entitled to question whether Conquest is really talking about a revolution or an insurrection.) Conquest concludes his reading by advising that Lenin is best seen as 'a monster'. 3 Since our interest is not in the superficial, neither acclamation nor defamation, neither god nor monster can provide us with a serious beginning.

*

* A concrete reading might misinterpret this as an advocacy of moral nihilism. This is not the case. Indeed the opposite is the case. The analysis of Lenin I offer as an alternative to hagiography/assassination is one which investigates Lenin's relation to a moral tale. Thus the question of the 'good' of Lenin is intended to be at the centre of my analysis.

The second set of barriers which might deflect our analysis relates to a persistent reluctance to treat Lenin as someone who can be properly regarded as a theorist. Until very recently the conventional view of Lenin in the West was of an actor/conspirator/tactician, rather than as a theorist. An exemplar of this mode of interpretation is Carew-Hunt who argues that.....4

"The theoretical side of Lenin is, in a sense, not serious."

In a similar way Conquest argues...5

"His impact upon the world was not, generally speaking, that of a theoretician.....the power and influence of all such writing (Lenin's) has arisen largely from the fact that the author himself carried out a major revolution."

Since 1970, * however, Western intellectuals have begun to rekindle an interest in Lenin's theorising. Writers such as

* It is true that Lukacs, a writer who is important in both Western and non-Western communist traditions, was giving Lenin serious attention as "the greatest thinker to have been produced by the revolutionary working-class movement since Marx" in 1924. Lukacs' contribution is both unique and exceptional.

Althusser (1971), Corrigan et al (1978) and Harding (1980) have devoted their attentions to Lenin as a revolutionary philosopher. Lane (1981) was the first writer to develop a fully-blown analysis of Lenin as a sociological theorist, and his work is discussed at length below.

Within the writing of those who are reluctant to see Lenin as a theorist, there is an implicit version of Lenin's relation to Marx. If one considers Conquest's work, for example, there is a view of a fundamental distinction between Marx as theorist and Lenin as actor. Now however crass and simplistic this version of Lenin's relationship to Marx may be, it nonetheless serves to highlight an important area of investigation in any account of that relationship.

What serves as a beginning for us, then, in examining the relation of Lenin to Marx is the question of praxis, the question of the relationship of speech to action, theory to practice, saying to doing within Lenin's concept of the revolution. I treat Lenin's version of praxis in a developmental fashion. The core of his theory of praxis is developed in the text "What Is To Be Done?" and represents a pre-revolutionary view. This view is developed in "State and Revolution" and in the post-revolutionary

text "Left-Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder". We begin with "What Is To Be Done?" *

* For an earlier, less critically developed view of Lenin's concept of praxis see "Reading Lenin's 'What Is To Be Done?' " by the present author in "Friends, Enemies and Strangers", edited by Blum, A and McHugh, P.

Section II

Lenin's "What Is to Be Done?" is an attempt to counteract the tendencies of reformism and terrorism and to show the character of the genuinely revolutionary. In characterising reformism and terrorism as tendencies, we can understand Lenin as avoiding the reification of these ideas as things or positions (to be agreed with, disagreed with, got rid of and so on). To see reformism and terrorism as tendencies is to understand them as perpetual possibilities within the dialectic of political thought. Tendency as perpetual possibility is an important conception for my analysis, and especially for thinking of the relationship of my reading of Lenin to that of others.

Reading "What Is to Be Done?" in this way means neither considering reformism and terrorism within the context of an epoch, within time, nor within the context of the idea of social structure. It is to think of reformism and terrorism as ideas whose essence is independent of concrete context. (This is not to say that in all epochs, or societies, these tendencies will assume the same guise or appearance, nor is it to say that the technical aspects of strategy adopted towards them by revolutionaries will be invariable. Nor is it to imply that this was Lenin's last word on the relationship of theory to practice.)

Therefore while some may have it that Lenin is only talking about the 'Economists' (reformists) and 'Revolutionists' (terrorists) who opposed the position of the revolutionary newspaper Iskra to which Lenin contributed in prerevolutionary Russia, I read Lenin as saying something about the intelligibility of reformism and terrorism independently of these considerations. Even though the exemplar of reformism at the time Lenin wrote "What Is to Be Done?" might have been the group associated with the newspaper Rabocheye Dyelo, I read Lenin's speech on reformism as making reference to a theory of gradualism which will surface in any situation where politicians and other human actors appear.

Seeing the tendencies of reformism and terrorism as perpetual possibilities is to see them as permanently available alters. That is to say that Lenin sees reformism and terrorism as ever-present temptations to the revolutionary. To see them as temptations is to see reformism and terrorism both as ideas which require resisting against, but also which have some good to them. Therefore "What Is to Be Done?" is to be read not as an attempt to obliterate, smash or get rid of reformism and terrorism, but an attempt to transform them. "What Is to Be Done?" is conventionally understood as a polemic, where polemic's sense is understood as the nullification of alter - making nothing of alter. Perhaps we can restore the good sense of polemic. In seeing tendency as perpetual temptation Lenin makes available a way in which reformism and terrorism can be polemicized. That is reformism and terrorism constitute poles or extremes. Insofar as

they constitute extremes they require to be resisted by the revolutionary. But equally this resistance takes form in cognizance of the fact of the tempting character of these poles. Since the poles have some good to them - are tempting - they display their potential (to be more than they are). A conventional polemicist sees his task as taking an extreme position to defeat another extreme. The practice of polemic by Lenin, however, does not involve Lenin becoming an extreme, but names the constant labour of working with his own extremes. The peculiar power of "What Is to Be Done?" is Lenin's own recognition that a real change - a revolution - involves changing self as well as other.

How does Lenin understand the version of the relationship between speech and action displayed by reformism and terrorism? Consider the following....6

"....These people who cannot pronounce the word "theoretician" without a sneer reveal in practice a failure to understand our most imperative practical tasks"

In this version, reformism and terrorism are characterised as being disdainful of speech. By regarding theory as an "indulgence", reformism and terrorism show a conception of speech as a weak actor. Theory, for them, is not a crucial concern; theory is not where the real action is.

Furthermore we might think about this piece...7

"...Some began to say that the working masses themselves have not yet advanced the broad and militant tasks which the revolutionaries are attempting to impose upon them, that they must continue to struggle for immediate political demands, to conduct the economic struggle against the employers and the governmentOthers said that....all we need to do is to snatch up our old friend, the "accessible" cudgel. To drop metaphor it means that we must.....stimulate the "spiritless" progress of the working-class movement by means of excitative terror."

In expressing a concern for the "immediate" and, in other passages, the "palpable", the "concrete", reformism is showing a preference for speech over language. Reformists use words - make speeches - but the reformist seeks to speak rather than to say, as Heidegger might have it. The reformist understands speech as rhetoric. Speech for the reformist is about persuasiveness. It does not matter what you say - as long as it succeeds in being convincing. Rhetoric faces towards results, consequences, and away from origin.

All of this is not to say that the reformists do not theorise. Reformists do theorise - they have a theory of gradualism (see below). However reformism makes its speech into a corresponder, a fitter. For example, they make their speech fit "the mood of the people". Hence when Lenin speaks of the reformists not being "responsible", we can read this as saying that reformism does not authorise anything by its speech. reformism conceals self by

corresponding to (using) other in its speech. Reformism does not own up to its speech. In a deep sense, reformism is not serious about its speech.

So what the revolutionary can show the reformist (how the revolutionary can transform the reformist) is the necessity to act responsibly, to own up to one's own speech. By concealing self - fitting self to other - the reformist fails to exercise self's responsibility, that is, he fails to see how it could make-a-difference-it-self. The reformist's irresponsibility is tempting to the revolutionary in that it manages the avoidance of rejection by the masses. Given a shared knowledge of the need for mass participation in a revolution, nonrejection, or acceptance appears attractive. However this fall short of the revolutionary once it is recognised that mere acceptance implies a sterile and therefore nonproductive, nonparticipative relationship. The revolutionary has to recognise what the reformist faces away from - that the act of owning one's speech necessarily carries a risk which also has to be worked with.

At the other extreme, terrorism in taking up the "accessible cudgel" has abandoned speech in frustration at the inaction of speech. Speech becomes an oracular mouthpiece in terrorism. "Words" take the guise of pronouncement, eg after an act of "excitative terror". Speech makes the appearance of announcer stating what has been done or what will be done. Terrorism is pre-emptory in that it wants to draw the lesson of a tale without

doing the work of telling the tale. In this way terrorism shows its disdain for alter. A statement or pronouncement is not a request for a response directed towards an equal, ie coworker. Pronouncement is not the work of a dialectician, but the determining of a reaction. Terrorism is the work of behaviouralism. Terrorism shows its behaviouralism in its reaction to the "spiritlessness" of alter (the masses). The reaction of the terrorist to this "spiritlessness" is to excite alter - apply a stimulus for the required action. The terrorist fails to act responsibly; he fails to make-a-difference by thinking that self is responsible for everything, thereby failing to see the place of alter in what is to be done. The terrorist cannot wait for and shows no respect for what is other than self. The kind of irresponsibility displayed by terrorism is tempting in that given a pressing need for something to be done, the immediacy of doing anything/everything holds an appeal. However this falls short of the revolutionary in that it is a way of reacting to a frustration with the masses which fails to involve participation. Terrorism fails to transform what it started with: its impulses.

So the praxis of the revolutionary resists the extremes of subordinating other to self (terrorism) and subordinating self to other (reformism). The revolutionary seeks to transform the excesses of thinking that self is responsible for all that is other (terrorism) and that self is responsible for no other (reformism) by the exercise of a responsible praxis. This act,

the revolutionary act, seeks to act in a way which shows itself (takes responsibility for, owns up to its speech), but which shows respect for other by leaving it with something to do. As such, the revolutionary sees the limits of boredom (reformism) and excitement (terrorism) as poles which require oscillation, ie which require something (responsibility) to turn themselves (expand their potential) into self-transformatory, ie revolutionary, practices. Terrorism and reformism cannot make the revolution in the deep sense that neither is a revolving actor. Both reject rather than revolve each other. Lenin moderates his extremes, holds the middle, by restraining yet acknowledging them. The revolutionary owns himself, rather than owning nothing (reformism) or owning everything (terrorism).

While the tendencies of reformism and terrorism, in forgetting the relationship between theory (language) and action (speech), can only see speech as a weak actor, Lenin understands speech as a powerful actor. Lenin shows us ways in which speech can act. For example:

1. Speech guides action - "Russian revolutionaries, guided by a genuinely revolutionary theory can at last rise to full stature."
2. Speech changes minds (converts?) - "A newspaper is a collective agitator."

3. Speech co-ordinates actors + actions - "A newspaper is a collective organizer."

For the revolutionary, speech is a powerful action. But consider the following: "...Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." Here we can read speech as an indispensable action. The only decisive action, the only action which makes-a-difference, is that which is oriented to the action of speech. How is it that speech can make a difference? Let us collect together again some senses in which Lenin sees speech as acting. Speech changes minds, speech organizes actors, and speech co-ordinates actions. What idea of speech would give form to these concrete usages? We can start by noting that speech is being understood in some way as a mover. Thus speech moves minds, moves people together (and apart), and lends momentum. Accordingly it's not so much that "Without revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary movement", as the action of speech is movement.

Perhaps this is too brash, for understanding speech as movement does not resonate too well with Lenin. To see some sense in our reading we must first come to grips with these dissonances.

Consider that if speech is a powerful action, then formulating speech as sheer movement is inappropriate. If speech is sheer movement, then speech might move us anywhere (everywhere and

nowhere). But the revolutionary is not interested in moving anywhere since the revolutionary's interest is in moving somewhere. Another way of thinking about this is to recognise that the revolutionary is not a drifter. Sheer movement (drift) is movement for movement's sake. This is to say that sheer movement is impersonal motion - drift does not make necessary the idea of a person (an actor?). We might think of the motion of a stream or the motion of the wind as exemplars of sheer movement. Sheer movement is the motion of being carried along - anywhere will do. Furthermore, drift does not make necessary Lenin's question "What is to be done?" because that question requires the idea of a person. Person can be conceived of as displaying the control necessary to start up or slow down his motion. Revolutionary movement as against the movement of drift shows the labour, the activity of generating and arresting. Drift leaves no room for self as responsible feature of environment. Drift is a dehumanised (personless) motion. Both the reformist and terrorist are exemplifications of drift. By failing to own his speech the reformist consigns himself to drifting with the prevailing political consciousness, while the terrorist is pushed along by his impulses in having failed to arrest them.

Another way of movement which is dissonant with the revolutionary, and which Lenin faces squarely, is vacillation. In arguing with the reformists and terrorists Lenin points out that "...they should have avoided confusion and vacillation." Vacillation is the urge to move in two polar opposed ways

simultaneously. In failing to control the urge to go in two ways at once, the vacillator moves nowhere. Vacillation is the tearing of self between two poles, two extremes, two alters. In merely feeling the pull of two temptations, the vacillator remains indecisive in his experience of them. Through his indecision the vacillator fails to transform either self or other (temptation, extreme). The inevitability in vacillation is its repetitiveness. Failure to transform means always repeating what one has experienced (sheer attraction) before. Vacillation's indecisiveness means the vacillator is stuck in the same groove.

On the other hand, the revolutionary displays what the vacillator lacks - knowledge of the good of decisiveness. The revolutionary experiences temptation, but rather than being torn by temptations, the revolutionary response is to moderate the extremism of temptation. The revolutionary experiences temptation as a challenge to be welcomed as an occasion for action (decisiveness). Decisiveness' good is in its recognition of how speech is author-ised. The vacillator's speech identifies self with other. Decisiveness recognises the author-ity of its own speech; it recognises self can make-a-difference.

What idea of movement will help us to make sense of the revolutionary conception of speech, if we can understand that this idea can neither be that of sheer movement, drift (moving anywhere), nor that of the confused two-ways-at-once movement displayed by the vacillator? A revolutionary conception of

speech understands movement as going somewhere rather than anywhere. Lenin's version of speech is movement which knows where it is going. Speech is the movement which does not lack orientation. The movement which displays its knowledge of what is to be done (its orientation) is movement which displays direction. How does the revolutionary produce a sense of direction - an orientedness? The importance of the presence and continual temptation of extremes (reformism and terrorism) lies partly in the fact that the work of labouring with polarities provides a bearing for the revolutionary. The continual work of achieving a relationship with an internally generated extreme provides the bearing necessary for direction.

The idea of speech as orientation, as direction, obliges us to return to the notion that the revolutionary, in contradistinction to its extremes, makes available the idea of a person - the idea of a responsible self. The revolutionary is a personal mode of theorising. Direction and orientation make necessary the notion of an actor - a self who displays responsibility. The idea of a person is the idea of the actor who shows responsibility as a feature of recognising both the place of self (that self can make-a-difference and ought to own his actions), and other (that other is left with something to be done). The personal, on the one hand, makes reference to the attempt to show the interrelatedness (mutually necessary in-incorporation) of the potentially estrangeable. Reformism and terrorism are, on the other hand, impersonal modes of theorising which begin and end

with an acceptance of estrangement as precondition.

How can we now understand the direction of revolutionary speech in relation to the speech of the vacillator? We might consider that Lenin sees vacillation as an outcome of lack of principle. This is a topic to which he journeys back frequently. At one point Lenin re-emphasises a statement of Marx: 8

"...Enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement but do not allow any bargaining over principles, do not make any theoretical concessions."

The principled speech is that which recognises and respects both its origins and where it is going (its direction). Principle implies a relationship between beginning and end. This is not a relationship between points, positions, or states of being, but more the achieving of a relationship between inspiration and aspiration. The revolutionary (principled), unlike the vacillator (unprincipled), learns the place of authority (that self can make-a-difference) and decisiveness (the need to act as a person, the need for human action. So the speech which displays direction is the speech which is principled. The principled speech in its directness is not to be diverted, unlike the vacillating speech which is diverted from one pole to another. The directness of revolutionary speech obliges us to concentrate our energies on the problematic. To be direct is to face up to rather than away from, to confront, to contend, to struggle. To hear the revolutionary in this way is to understand speech as an act of engagement, a struggle.

In trying to flesh out the idea of speech as a struggle, we might consider how Lenin characterises that which fails to make-a-difference, that which falls short of a struggle. For instance, consider Lenin's warnings about the danger of opportunism. The opportunist is characterised as being "slavish". While to struggle is to make a response to a situation, the opportunist, in waiting for a break, lets the situation control him. The opportunist accedes to the fact of lacking control and accepts his subordination to history. Note how the opportunist can accomplish his subordination. Subordination is only possible through the divorce of self from other (history), ie it is only possible through the externalisation of history. In this way the opportunist fails to see himself as a responsible (involved, engaged) feature of his environment. In pointing out the weakness of opportunism, Lenin is not just saying do not trust the fickleness of circumstances as though he were making a complaint. Complaining somehow seems to rest on a proffered lack of, or negation of, control. To complain is to say I am not the proper executive of control, but I want someone to exercise control for me. Complaining is a request to be seen as one on behalf of whom control ought to be authorised. What Lenin is saying is that the appropriate response to an opportunity is to struggle with it - the revolutionary seeks to transform opportunity from limit to contingency. The opportunist accepts history, chance, as a limit (ie an absolute, once-and-for-all, fixed boundary) whereas the

revolutionary is he who contends with history, he who sees history not as mechanically independent puppet-master of man and doler of breaks, but as an intimate process offering the possibility of human engagement. To struggle is to see history's problematical character, to see history as raising the problem of what is to be done. The opportunist reads history as fate; he says I am controlled by irresistibly powerful forces, and my work is to make the best of whatever comes my way. However, the revolutionary sees the humanity of force; he sees the possibility of self's involvement in force as the work of coming together to become involved in the interaction of forces. Note how it is necessary for Lenin to show in the first place why opportunism has to be resisted. Seeing history as the opportunist does is a temptation. If history is a matter of the play of fate, then the opportunist cannot be censured in failure (the breaks did not turn up equals the opportunist's failure). Yet even in failure the revolutionary has to display labour - has to come to terms with - grapple with the implicated nature of failure. Given the need for constant struggle, the ease of opportunism is a seductive alternative.

Perhaps we can now see that to understand that reading the movement of revolutionary speech as struggle is not to see the revolutionary as he who snatches any and every opportunity to act. We can think of how it might be that to engage is to resist the urge to do something. For example, there are occasions when inaction is a strategic imperative. This might be the case in a

situation where the opportunity to act is available but one does not have the necessary resources to bring off an action. This is not only a technical matter for what we have said can also be read as saying that struggle incorporates the idea of patience. Patience can be understood as a struggle in that to be patient is to control the impulses of the self. (As we shall see this is one way in which the revolutionary can be distinguished from the terrorist.)

Now, in terms of the relationship between self and other, struggle cannot be understood as the attempt of self to dominate other for that would be to fail to contend with self. That is, the revolutionary does not understand one person's work as leading to the domination of another. The revolutionary makes room for - leaves a place for - respects other. Because he has a place, a part, we can see again that the revolutionary is somewhere, rather than the terrorist who seeks to be everywhere, and the reformist who seeks to be nowhere. A preference for somewhere shows a preference for doing over drifting, character (the product of a person) over fate (the work of chance). The revolutionary shows us the humanity of intervention - struggling in between two extremes.

How can we understand the relationship between that which displays the idea of speech as the praxis of struggle (revolution) and that which falls short of struggle (reformism and terrorism). We might consider that Lenin characterises both

tendencies as being subservient. Reformism and terrorism are conceived of as "bowing" and "cringing" to spontaneity. These characterisations can be read as icons of the tendencies' failure to struggle with history. The failure of the extremes is the failure to see themselves as responsible features of history. This is linked to the problem of spontaneity. Spontaneity is the expression of the momentary, the immediate, which can serve as dislocators - separating present from past, self from history. The urge for spontaneity is the urge for production without work, wishes without planning, an end without a beginning. Reformism and terrorism are a-historical in that they provide no notion of engagement with history. There is no sense of involvement in the process of becoming (history). The revolutionary, in being involved in a process of change, enters into a relationship between self and history where it is understood that self can make-a-difference, and that the product of this interaction - the historical individual - exists not in a state of being, but exists in and through a process of dialectical movement: the movement of change. All of this brings to mind our prior notion of reformism and terrorism as im-personal modes of theorising. The tendencies' lack of involvement names the idea that they require the work of externalisation of other, the work of detachment to be what they are.

How can the terrorist and the reformist be conceived of as achieving the "bowing" to spontaneity? Let's think about the following: 9

"...The economists and the terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the economists merely bow to the spontaneity of the labour movement, pure and simple, while the terrorists bow to the passionate indignation of the intellectual."

Reformism (Economism) bows to spontaneity by failing to struggle with the workers, and hence, Lenin's objections to the fact that reformists are unwilling to tell the labour movement anything it does not already know. The reformist sees the workers as a limit to be accepted. In conceiving progress as a particular relationship - adaptation between self and environment which seeks to fit self to environment - the reformist shows half-heartedness by refusing to struggle with, to change environment. Through seeking to fit, neither to be ahead of nor behind "progress", reformism shows its concern for survival. The reformist is afraid that speed or slothfulness will destroy. However, in electing for a nonproductive relationship between self and environment, the reformist chooses stagnation (a slow dying) to the other extreme - the fast dying of the terrorist. Rather than struggle with environment, the reformist lets environment produce his speech. The deep sense in which reformism is conservative is its failure to engage with environment, its understanding of environment as limit. Reformism externalises environment as opposing force, rather than reading it as a means of production (change). The reformist's relationship to his environment is a nonproductive one. Conceived in this way we can hear the reformist's retort to the revolutionary, "Be realistic", as a request to let the

environment produce one's speech. The reformist understands the progress of adaptation as "gradualism". Gradualism is a way of reading the transition to socialism as an accretion of things, "palpables" - seeables (concessions). For the reformists the good society is a state, and a state to which there can be an approximation - recall the notion that a "mixed" economy is "half-way to socialism".

If the reformist allows the environment to rule him, then the terrorist can be conceived of as allowing the impulses of self, (desire, passionate indignation) to produce his action. The terrorist, though conscious of the need to make a change, is as half-hearted as the reformist in merely wanting to act on the environment. In his half-heartedness the terrorist fails to struggle with self. The terrorist capitulates to impulse, fails to discipline desire. Better, the terrorist conceives of self as desire and experiences desire as an urge. Note the discord here with the commonplace idea that the terrorist is self-less, ie sacrifices self in the service of a cause. Note too that it is not being said that impulses are bad. Everyone needs impulse, and urge is a human possibility. However, although impulse belongs with the self, it does not exhaust the idea of self. Impulse provides energy, but whether energy is used wisely or foolishly is a matter of election. How can we read the impulsiveness of the terrorist? Consider how the terrorist conceives of change. How can change be conceived of such that urge is acted out in the environment? The terrorist conceives of

the environment as a universe of observables. Target implies the objectification of what is desired. Therefore, showing commitment as a terrorist means making seeable one's urges acting. The action of the terrorist's urge is the impulse to obliterate themselves - to destroy targets. In so doing, terrorism fails to distinguish surface features from essence and destruction from production. The terrorist is impelled to destroy the topography of the objects of his urges - his targets.

Reformism and terrorism make available one mode of relationship to desire. The tendencies re-experience the strength of desire as an urge and their reaction to their urge is to satisfy it, ie to succumb to it. The temptation of reformism and terrorism is their here and nowness, ie their immediacy. Both can bring to appearance the palpable in their action - concessions and destroyed targets. What is tempting is their quest to react spontaneously out of the urge to do something. The revolutionary experiences the same urge, the same temptation, but his response is not the reaction of succumbing to urge, rather he moderates it, transforms his urges into desire. The revolutionary experiences urgency not as the need to give in to impulse (thus temporarily satisfying urge) but as the necessity for constant work. Given the strength of urge, relief is a human possibility, but the revolutionary resists and moderates his temptations. Hence Lenin shows us what he knows in the very title "What Is to be Done?". Reformists and terrorists cannot respond to the struggle that is this question. One avoids the

question by doing anything (impulsiveness); the other by doing nothing (using the environment as an excuse for no action). Neither is willing to do the work of revolving. What this means is that terrorism and reformism display a tempting but excessive relationship to desire. Both seek relief from this pressure. While the reformist succumbs by suffering, the terrorist succumbs by experiencing agitation - the need to excite. The revolutionary, though experiencing the good of the same desire (something must be done), resists the temptation of both poles. The revolutionary moderates both the excesses of suffering which externalises desire and engenders the feeling that nothing can be done about the pain of the urge (self can not make-a-difference), and excitement which implies externalisation of the object of desire, experiencing a disembodiment of self from other.

In succumbing to temptations, the tendencies fail to show the labour of transformation, the labour of making-a-difference. The work of reformism and terrorism is not that of the revolutionary, they do not display what is to be done. Although terrorism appears to be the tendency most conscious of the need to do, the terrorist merely enacts his wishes thereby reproducing the urge in desire. On the one hand, the terrorist wants to be a god. He wants to have (enact) his wishes. On the other hand, the revolutionary shows his knowledge of the distinction between man and god through his recognition of the place of labour. The revolutionary knows that the desire to change requires the work of transformative labour: man cannot just have his wishes.

All the motion of reformism and terrorism is the attempt to make a state. In seeking relief from urge, they seek the state of rest. They seek the state of being there the action they take now will be unnecessary (will satisfy their needs). Analytically reformism and terrorism represent inaction. Terrorism and reformism fail to see that desire necessitates constant, continuous labour. If revolution is a struggle, then the engagement of struggle is perpetual and ongoing.

Section III

At this juncture it is appropriate to take stock of what we have learned of Lenin's conception of the relationship of theory to practice, of language to speech at the early phase of its development in his thought, ie in 'What Is to be Done?'

Firstly, the revolutionary is to be distinguished from its extremes - reformism and terrorism - to the extent that it has a stronger version of theory's place in relation to practice. Thus far, however, theory is to be seen by Lenin as valuable in so far as it represents a most powerful practice. Lenin shows us the power of theory as a mover - as a form of practice.

Secondly, we have argued that while reformism and terrorism display an excessive relation to desire - they capitulate to urge - the revolutionary shows his discipline (his struggle) by moderating the excesses of his impulses. Now, if revolutionary moderation is thoroughgoing, we have argued that the revolutionary struggles not just with other, but also with self. Thus revolutionary theory, in orienting to principle, sees the futility of siezing any or every opportunity to act (in contradistinction to the terrorist). In moderating his own excesses, the revolutionary requires respect for the idea of

patience. Now in Lenin's theorising in 'What Is to be Done?' there is a partial recognition of the virtue of patience. For example Lenin argues that it is particularly foolish for the Russian revolutionary movement to resort to acts of 'excitative terror' because this gives the Tsarist regime 'carte blanche' for an increase in repression. Thus patience is viewed here in a technical sense, ie with respect to tactics. However what we have to ask is does his subsequent theorising allow us to develop respect for the idea of patience, rather than leave us with a concrete or technical version.

If patience is integrated into revolutionary theory in a deep sense (as we have argued it should be) then Lenin will allow us to see patience as more than a technical feature of tactics. If theory and practice are genuinely integrated, then rules (tactics) can be changed, while preserving an orientation to principle. Since patience is a feature of revolutionary theory, then practice should embody that virtue. A failure to link theory and practice will ultimately result in an im-patient, and opportunistic practice. We shall be concerned to investigate whether the development of Lenin's theorising respects the idea of patience.

Having argued that patience is a virtue, we must further develop the sense in which patience can be understood not just as one of a number of virtues, but one which the revolutionary requires to develop a particular awareness of. While patience is commonly

understood of as passivity, we have shown that it is not to be confused with inaction. Patience does something positive to urges - it transforms urge into desire. Patience, then, requires an educated actor. It implies the good of suffering. So what does patience suffer? Patience suffers (transforms) the temptation to do something (when tactically it may be possible to do so) in the service of embodying a principle. What patience displays is an all-round vision which respects action or practice in a particular way. Patience is a virtue which helps us to understand the distinction between timely or decisive action and action which does not display these characteristics. The only truly decisive intervention (revolutionary practice) is that which is timely - neither late nor premature. Patience names the suffering of the revolutionary actor whose all-round vision of stages of development allows him to act decisively.

The idea of patience furthermore allows us to provide a link with Marx's concept of universalism in revolution. Patience describes the kind of learning necessary for the production of the universal individual. An impatient or one-sided mode of learning is displayed by the rebel whose version of educating himself is to break a rule, yet remain ignorant of principle. The revolutionary (all-sided) mode of self-education implies suffering the temptations of conformity/deviance in favour of learning how to be strong - learning how to violate a rule which preserves principle. Patience is deeply the opposite of passivity and quiescence. Patience requires the generative power

of self-control and self-consciousness characteristic of the universal individual. The universalism of the revolutionary is not abstract or Utopian. Universalism is not a vision of everyone becoming equally talented polymaths (though impatience can convert universalism into overambition). Marx's slogan 'from each according to ability' recognises an inequality of potential talent. The idea of patience shows us that the all-roundedness of universalism in revolution connotes the self-conscious, self-controlled character of maturity. Patience works on developing the potential of real as opposed to spurious strengths. In so doing the revolutionary violates rule, not wilfully or blindly, but in a way which preserves its orientation to principle.

By the stage of "What Is to be Done?" Lenin has so far sought only to distinguish actions which can or cannot lead to a seizure of state power by revolutionaries. The task of learning the virtue of patience - of integrating theory and practice - of embodying principle in practice is postponed.

CHAPTER 4

Section I

In this chapter we will be concerned to continue our analysis of the development of Lenin's thought on revolution in terms of the relationship of speech to language, theory to practice. The dominant theme of this chapter is an investigation of this development as it manifests itself in the relation of rule to principle. There are two central texts which we shall consider in detail. These are the immediately pre-revolutionary text, 1 'The State and Revolution' and the post-revolutionary text, 2 'Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder'. We begin by considering the place of 'State and Revolution' in this process of development.

It is a striking feature of almost all analyses of Lenin's work that 'The State and Revolution' is regarded as a unique text, as something special, even pivotal. What is the Character of this uniqueness? In the rule-bound conception of revolution there is a particular view of this uniqueness. A good example of the rule-bound tradition's view of the place of 'The State and Revolution' in Lenin's thought is given by Conquest 3

"Coming when it does, it is one of the most extraordinary and revealing of all his writings. It is not (as much of his earlier work had been) any sort of guide to political tactics, but an expression of the most purely Utopian and theoretical side of the Marxist doctrine of society."

This version of 'State and Revolution' sees a fundamental division between theory and practice. Lenin viewed as permanent revolutionary (tactician) has become a temporary philosopher (theorist). In the rule-bound conception, 'State and Revolution' becomes less than intelligible since, for them, it has nothing to say of rule (tactics). Therefore it is not so much that 'State and Revolution' is seen as unique, as it is seen as a temporary aberration. The strongest version of the 'aberration' view of 'State and Revolution' is provided by Kolakowski, 4 who argues that.....

"State and Revolution' says nothing whatever about the party."

Thus the technical version of Lenin sees 'State and Revolution' as quixotic and problematical in that it supposedly has no relationship to rule, nor to the main agency of violating/recreating rule, ie the party.

The principled conception of revolution also sees 'The State and Revolution' as unique. However the principled version sees this uniqueness not as an aberration, nor fundamentally incompatible

with all his other work (ie not as hypocrisy). We see the uniqueness of this text as the clearest highlighting of a tension or ambivalence which is present throughout his work. 'State and Revolution' brings into sharpest focus an issue of central importance to the development of Lenin's theorising.

In order to situate 'State and Revolution' we must begin by recognising a continuity of interest with his earlier work. What Lenin is attempting in this work is a struggle with his extremes-reformists ('opportunists' - exemplified by Kautsky) and anarcho-terrorists. He argues that both extremes avoid a key question - that of the State - which a revolutionary has to face up to. While the revolutionary treats the question of the state seriously, 'opportunists' and 'anarchists' shy away from the implications of answering the question fully. What Lenin articulates is a view that the revolutionary gives thorough-going answers to the serious questions (ie the question of the state) while the extremes stop short of a full answer. For Lenin, the terrorist stops-short, in the sense that while he argues that the state must be smashed, he has no answer to what should take the place of the state. 5 In a similar way opportunism 6 argues that state power should be seized, but has no firm answer to the question of what should succeed this situation (for Lenin, the opportunists fear smashing the state even in the long run because they have no developed view of what should replace the state). It would be tempting to say here that what Lenin has sought to demonstrate is the universal, or all-round character of a

revolutionary attitude to the state as opposed to the one-sided or partial view of opportunists and anarchists. However we ought to restrain that temptation until we have evaluated the character of Lenin's version of universalism. Critically (as we argue below) this will involve questioning whether Lenin's thought is congruent of the relevance of patience to universalism, of the distinction between premature action and decisive intervention.

The long-view of 'State and Revolution' is that a socialist society can only be achieved in Russia by a series of three stages of development. Firstly, the bourgeois state must be smashed. Secondly the bourgeois state is to be replaced by a proletarian state (the 'dictatorship' of the proletariat). Thirdly, with the consolidation of the revolution, and the universalisation of production relationships, the state would 'wither away'. Thus there are two interlinked themes in this process. Firstly the indispensability of a strongly disciplined and centralised state apparatus used by the proletariat to consolidate its leadership. Secondly the long term nature of participation and organisation which would characterise socialist society.

What provides the link between these two themes, and what provides the motive power for the drive through the three stages of development toward socialism is Lenin's view of universalism. From the point of view of a principled account what is significant about Lenin's discussion of universalism in 'State

and Revolution' is that it is an occasion for Lenin to directly confront his relationship to Marx (and also Engels). The argument Lenin puts forward is that capitalism has itself created many of the pre-conditions for the transition to the universal-man of the higher stages of socialist development. Thus he argues....7

"Capitalist culture has created large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and on this basis the great majority of the functions of the old 'state power' have become so simplified, and can be reduced to such exceedingly simple operations of registration, filing and checking that they can be easily performed by every literate person, can quite easily be performed for ordinary 'workmen's wages', and that these function can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of privilege, of every semblance of 'official grandeur'.

One aspect of capitalist universalisation is then the simplification and routinisation of the tasks of administration. According to Lenin this simplification will, in the long run, allow rule to become participative such that....8

"Under socialism, all will govern in turn, and will soon become accustomed to no-one governing."

If we recall Marx's discussion of alienated universalism within capitalism, the most obvious reaction to Lenin's analysis is that he is glossing Marx's discussion. There is little of the sense of the force necessary for a dialectical (decisive) intervention which is necessary to transform the distorted (negative) universalism of capitalism into the genuine (positive)

universalism of socialism, in Lenin's discussion.

Lenin is nevertheless sensitive to the charge that his analysis is simplistic and Utopian. He makes this clear in the following extract....9

"We are not Utopians, we do not 'dream' of dispensing at once with all administration, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams, based upon incomprehension of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are different. No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, control, and 'foremen and accountants.'

So Lenin's reply to the charges of over-simplicity and Utopianism is to say that the revolution will proceed in stages, and that it is to be achieved with 'people as they are now'. However this would be Utopian if 'people as they are now' ie the people of Russia did not display the characteristics or pre-conditions for a transition to universalism. In other words the big issue here is one of prematurity. In beginning to investigate the issue of whether Lenin integrates patience into his vision of universalism, of whether he respects the distinction between premature action and decisive intervention, we can consider the following development of his argument in 'State and Revolution'...10

"The development of capitalism, in turn, creates the preconditions that enable really 'all' to take part in the administration of

the state. Some of these preconditions are: universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries, then the 'training and disciplining' of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialised apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc. etc.

Given these economic preconditions, it is quite possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats, to proceed immediately, overnight, to replace them in the control over production and distribution, in the work of keeping account of labour and products, by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population."

The significance of this discussion is that it is really an analysis of the conditions for a successful transition to socialism, not in Russia at all, but in 'the most advanced capitalist countries'. Furthermore, by his own admission, the 'backward' Russian proletariat (in relation to the proletariats of Western Europe) fulfils none of the preconditions eg universal literacy he mentions. *

In this section of the chapter we have made a small beginning to conceiving of Lenin's theorising as premature. We develop this concept by looking at the significance of prematurity as it surfaces as an idea with respect to the tension and ambivalence inherent in Lenin's theorising.

* Lenin's optimism in respect of 'backward' Russia is related to his theory of the 'uneven development of capitalism' which is discussed below.

Section II

At the beginning of this chapter we argued that a rule-bound conception of revolution sees 'State and Revolution' as an aberration in Lenin's thought. Furthermore, we saw that Kolakowski charged that in 'State and Revolution' by contrast with all the rest of Lenin's work, he has 'nothing whatever to say about the party'. The rule-bound reading of Lenin sees the centrality of party in Lenin's thought as the dominant focus of Lenin's analysis. This argument is developed to suggest that the main difference between Marx and Lenin is that, to use the words of E. H. Carr, we see in Lenin....11

"the substitution of party for class as the motive force of revolution"

The 'substitution' argument is one which unites a broad range of critics of Lenin, both Marxist and non-Marxist alike. Writers such as Rosa Luxemburg argued that Lenin's emphasis upon the centralisation of power in the party robbed the proletariat of its initiative and independence. In the pre-revolutionary period * Trotsky was to take this argument to its logical conclusion

* Trotsky eventually (prior to the October revolution) changed his mind concerning the leading role of the party, and was eventually to advocate the necessity of the party as the 'vanguard' of the proletariat.

when he asserted that the result of this substitution would be that...12

"...the organisation of the Party takes the place of the party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the organisation; and finally the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee."

We can begin to develop a principled account by recalling Section I of this chapter where we saw that 'State and Revolution' neither ignores the process of centralisation nor the place of mass participation in revolution, but rather looks at the relationship of one to the other. Kolakowski is wrong when he claims that 'State and Revolution' has 'nothing whatever to say of the Party'. The party is referred to at various points as 'guide', 'teacher' and 'leader'. 'State and Revolution' is concerned with the relationship between the twin forces of centralisation (the leading role of the party) and participation (mass involvement in administration via the agency of the Soviets). In the principled account 'State and Revolution's uniqueness is to be seen not as deviation, aberration nor hypocrisy, but as the clearest possible focussing upon a tension or ambivalence concerning the relationship of these two forces.

The tension between centralisation of party power and the development of mass participation is referred to in Adam Ulam's work. 13 Ulam indicates that there is an anarchistic (participatory) element in Lenin's thought which is most

articulately expressed in 'State and Revolution'. Lane's 14 work is the most highly-developed in this context. He points out that, while Lenin saw the centralised power of the party as crucial, this centralised power was not conceived of as autocracy in the sense that Lenin intended this power as leaving room for the independent initiative (participation) of the masses. In spite of this, Lane concedes 15 that while centralisation of power was achieved, participation remained a programmatic objective. This failure is something for which Lane has no explanation. * For us, this is explainable in terms of a tension between an engaged concept of centralisation and an abstract concept of participation. The failure to transform the abstraction of his concept of participation is a failure which is linked to his abstracted (premature) concept of universalism.

* Despite the fact that Lane has a conception of Lenin's premature concept of revolution, he fails to connect this with his analysis of the relationship between centralisation and participation.

Section III

We ought now to consider what fuels the premature optimism of 'The State and Revolution'. The intellectual grounding of this optimism in Lenin's perspective is to be traced to his theory of the combined and uneven development of capitalism. This aspect of Lenin's theorising is developed in two texts, namely 16 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia' and 17 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism'.

There are two principal aspects of the process of development of capitalism internationally for Lenin. In the first place, capitalism develops internationally as an integrated system. Secondly the rate of development of capitalist societies is variable or uneven, producing 'advanced' and 'retarded' capitalisms. This development occurs in a period when the advanced capitalisms generate empires which they exploit as sources of cheap raw materials and new markets. The development of these forces has certain consequences for the relationship between capitalist classes and various national proletariats. In the advanced capitalist societies, the 'super-profits' gained from imperial expansion allow the potential for capital to bribe or buy-off their proletariats (or more accurately the leaders of the organised sectors of the proletariat - the trade union leadership) of these advanced societies. Capitalism's development in Russia is however retarded and it does not develop a strong domestic bourgeoisie. Furthermore, while the retarded

development of capitalism in Russia creates a minority proletariat, the vestiges of a quasi-feudal social structure are to be found in both the peasantry (which constitutes by far the majority of the population before, during and for many years after the October Revolution) and a Tsarist monarchy which clung to political power. Socially and economically, Russia was backward, but most importantly for Lenin, this backward society was politically unstable. This political instability was not due to the strength of the fledgling proletariat, but to the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie combined with the inflexibility of the Russian Tsardom.

For Lenin the most important implication of the theory of combined and uneven development is the claim that the chain of capitalist societies can be 'smashed at its weakest link' ie in Russia. In seeking to analyse this version of revolution we ought to recall certain fundamental differences between a principled and a rule-bound conception of revolution in relation to the making of the first revolution.

In the principled account we argued that Marx saw revolution as orienting to principle, as the development of man's universal essence. The first revolution is crucial in terms of orientation to principle. Not any beginning will suffice in the conception of revolution as orientation to principle, only a beginning which can lead to the dialectical transformation of man's universal potential. This is the root of Marx's view that the revolution,

to be successful, had to involve a transformation of one of the most advanced capitalist societies where the (albeit distorted) forms of universalism had already begun to have been developed. As we saw in Chapter II, Marx only considered Russia as a society which might aid the process of revolution where it mattered - in the advanced societies with the most advanced proletariats.

In the rule-bound conception, revolution as a process is confused with the achievement of an event - the seizure of state power. Here, any beginning will do - the nature of society initiating the process is of, at best, peripheral importance. Seizure of any favourable opportunity to snatch (political) power is the keynote. Success is understood of in terms of the ability to hold on to (political) power, rather than orientation to the principle of which revolution is an expression.

At first sight, the theory of uneven development seems to be different from the rule-bound conception of revolution in the sense that uneven development does have a conception of a likely and desirable society for the first revolution ie a society (weakest link) like Russia. However this choice is informed not by principle (which would consider how fruitful a society is for the development of universal/socialist man) but by primarily political considerations. Russia is a society which presents opportunities for the seizure of state power because of the weakness of its bourgeoisie and the inflexibility of Tsardom in transition. As we saw in Chapter 2 Marx argued against the

Jacobin error of attempting to force through a political revolution (even where tactically this is possible - even where it is possible to seize state power) when the social conditions do not permit of a genuine (universal) transformation. Lenin's theory of uneven development amounts to an advocacy of establishing what is, and what he admits is, a 'backward' proletariat in the vanguard of world revolution. *

'State and Revolution', informed as it is by Lenin's theory of uneven development, represents on the one hand a development of his view of tactics and on the other hand an ambivalent vision of revolution - a vision flawed by its prematurity. In one sense, 'State and Revolution' is a development upon 'What is to be Done?'. While 'What is to be Done?' establishes appropriate tactics for (establishing an organisation capable of) seizing state power, 'State and Revolution' indicates appropriate tactics for both seizing and holding on to state power. It is not so much that 'State and Revolution' orients to revolution in terms

* This is the case, even if we accept the caveat which Lenin makes, that this will only 'temporarily' be the case, ie that the centre of revolutionary gravity could be moved to an advanced society. The view that the Russian Revolution could 'spark' revolutions in the advanced capitalist world is a feature of this perspective to which we return below.

of tactics rather than principle, as much 'State and Revolution' demonstrates that Lenin has learned something about tactics, but not the best tactics (not tactics which can lead to the development of the all-round man required in Marx's vision), ie tactics which can help him orient to principle). Lenin's view of revolution is flawed by its inability to recognise the distinction between premature action and decisive intervention. Theory becomes detached from practice and speech becomes unconscious of its indebtedness to theory. We now examine the character of Lenin's prematurity in relation to universalism.

Section IV

In chapter one we saw that Marx had a vision of a universal (revolutionary) actor. One aspect of the universal actor, we recall, is that he is conceived of as a conscious and self-responsible being. The revolutionary actor is seen as one who initiates and controls his relationship to history. The (self-responsible) activism of the revolutionary is echoed in Lenin's discussion of the relation of revolutionary to reformist in 'What is to be Done?'. In that early text Lenin argues that the revolutionary engages (acts self-responsibly upon) his environment, while the reformist allows environment to rule him. Thus the revolutionary seeks to shape history while the reformist accommodates himself within the pressure of its flow.

Having initiated the October Revolution, Lenin's response to his critics is particularly revealing. He claims....18

"...our efforts....have been justified. They have turned out not to be an adventure..., but a necessary transition to the international revolution, through which a country must pass which has been placed in a position of leadership in spite of its undeveloped and backward state."

This reply to his critics is interesting not so much in its indication of the Russian Revolution's dependence upon an immediately ensuing international (European) revolution, which is discussed below, as its conception of what the action of the Russian Revolution itself represents. To say that the Russian

proletariat has 'been placed in a position of leadership' is to view the revolutionary actor as being ruled by conditions (favourable) 'in spite of its underdeveloped and backward state'. This is to see the rule of conditions as decisive and the development of the proletariat as secondary. A principled account, on the contrary, sees the self-responsibility (activism) of the revolutionary as being dependent upon maturity, development and progressiveness. To take an opportunity, even where conditions rule favourably, is premature 'adventurism', if the motive force (the proletariat) has not generated the self-education to transform opportunity into a genuine (universal) achievement. In short, to see maturity as secondary is to advocate prematurity, to invite the ultimate rule of conditions.

In Lenin's later work (see especially the evaluation of 'Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder') there is a painful and only partially developed recognition of the prematurity of his theorising. As we indicated in section one of this chapter, Lenin presents an optimistically premature vision of the development of universal (socialist) man in State and revolution. We may remember that he argued that capitalist culture had 'simplified' the tasks of administration to such an extent that they 'could be performed by every literate person', such that, in the long run, 'really all' could participate in the process of rule. As early as 1918, he was to see that this was to over-anticipate what could be achieved....19

"Our work of organising proletarian accounting and control has obviously....lagged behind the work of directly expropriating the expropriators....The art of administration is not an art that one is born to, it is acquired by experience....Without the guidance of specialists in the various fields of knowledge, technology and experience, the transition to socialism will be impossible....Because of the indispensability of the specialists we have had to resort to the old bourgeois method and to agree to pay a very high price for the 'services' of the biggest bourgeois specialists....Clearly, such a measure is a compromise, a departure from the principles of the Paris Commune...a step backward on the part of our Socialist Soviet state power, which from the very outset proclaimed and pursued the policy of reducing high level salaries to the level of the wages of the average worker."

The 'step backwards' is only peripherally related to a reliance upon bourgeois methods of payment, ie a reinstatement of income inequality. Essentially this step-backwards indicates that one of the universal skills - 'the art of administration' has not been acquired by the experience of the Russian proletariat. Prematurity results in dependence not upon universal, but upon one-sided actors - specialists.

One feature of Lenin's theorising which appears to establish a commonality with Marx is the view that universalism necessitates revolution be seen as irrevocably international rather than national in its nature. This stress upon internationalism is something we can trace throughout the development of Lenin's work. We have seen (chapter 3) that the early work 'What is to be Done?' emphasised the indispensability of revolution moving

beyond national boundaries, and how this theme is developed in 'State and Revolution'. In the post-revolutionary period this insistence becomes even more pronounced. In 1918, Lenin argues against Kautsky that....20

"To count on a European revolution is obligatory for a Marxist."

There is, therefore, no question that Lenin did understand that a revolution in Europe, ie in an advanced society, was necessary, if communism was to be firmly established at all. However, if we wish to investigate Lenin's relation to Marx's theorising, the really important question is not the abstract question - did they share a common interest in internationalism? - but the question did they share a common view of the movement from national to international in revolution?, ie does Lenin have a principled conception of the movement from partial (national) to universal (international)?.

In Lenin, the transitional movement of revolution is analysed within his theory of uneven development. There are two aspects concerning the theorisation of transition in this perspective.

The first aspect concerns the possibility of Russia 'skipping a stage of development'. Russia can take the lead by skipping a capitalistic phase of development. There is no conception of there either being a cost to be paid for this leap, nor of the leap itself being premature. In the later work, the prematurity of the leap is conceded. Lenin summarises the course of the

Russian revolution in 1921 by saying....21

"Borne along on the crest of a wave of enthusiasm...we reckoned...on being able to organise the state production and state distribution of products on communist lines in a small peasant country by order of the proletarian state. Experience proved that we were wrong. It transpires that a number of transitional stages are necessary - state capitalism and socialism in order to prepare by many years of effort for the transition to communism...We must first set to work in this small peasant country to build solid little gangways to socialism by way of state capitalism. Otherwise we shall never get to communism: we will never bring these scores of millions of people to communism. That is what experience, what the objective course of development of the revolution has taught us.

Skipping a stage is, therefore, seen for what it is - prematurity. Capitalism has not been skipped at all, as it is recognised that a period of 'state' capitalism is required to build the conditions for transition to socialism and communism.

The second aspect of the version of transition developed in the theory of uneven development is the notion that the Russian revolution can 'spark' an international revolution, ie revolutions in Western Europe. Now, the notion that the Russian revolution can 'spark' an international revolution is somewhat unusual. In Lenin, it was intended to suggest that a national revolution (Russia) could ignite an already potentially explosive mixture (European states). However, this form of analysis is quite close to that which he repeatedly seeks to criticise - the 'spontaneity' of the anarchists. It is almost as though the Russian revolution is being seen as mechanically setting off a

chain reaction. Perhaps this is to develop too negative a view of Lenin if what we have said is that he presents transition (learning) as stimulus - response.

A more positive and developed view of Lenin's concept of transition would ask of him, how does the theory of uneven development expect to inspire the international proletariat? Now we should ask what is Lenin's concept of the Russian revolution's lesson/inspiration? Here we may recall a passage 22 in which Lenin talks of this.

"...the Russian proletariat can win a second victory. The cause is no longer hopeless. The second victory will be the socialist victory in Europe. The European workers will show us 'how to do it', and then, in conjunction with them, we shall bring about a socialist revolution."

Inspiration is conceived of as example. One (national) proletariat serves as an example for another. The Russian proletariat inspires the European proletariat and vice versa. We must now, however, consider what kind of an example does the Russian revolution serve to provide by way of a 'spark', by way of inspiration? To serve as a genuine exemplar, ie as an inspiration, any example would not do. As we here begin to see, the theory of uneven development is a bad example in that it does not teach or exemplify the fundamental difference between premature action and timely intervention. The theory of uneven development places the most backward proletariat in the vanguard. Premature action forces one national proletariat to stand alone.

Instead of transition, prematurity invites isolation and stagnation: instead of progression it invites regression. In short, a bad example serves as no inspiration.

What we have been seeking to investigate is the cost to universalism of ignoring the virtue of patience. Our principled reading of Marx shows that it is sometimes necessary to take the long road to revolution even when the short route is tempting (a lesson which some versions of modernism seem to have learned - see Chapter 7). We may recall from Chapter 2 Marx's interpretation of the failings of Jacobin prematurity - the folly of forcing through a revolution when the political opportunity to seize state power is present, but the social conditions are inappropriate for a transition to universalism. Lenin failed to learn this lesson, and both advocated and produced a premature revolution. We argued in Chapters one and two that the movement of the proletariat towards universalism was the decisive force bringing about revolution. The development of a universal consciousness and culture amongst the proletariat is a stage which cannot be 'skipped'. Furthermore, the development of this aspect of universalism, the all-round consciousness and culture of the proletariat, is something (even if it develops in different ways in various societies) which does not occur spontaneously, mechanically nor inevitably. This development cannot be presupposed nor forced forward prematurely. In common with all forms of learning this development requires to be inspired by nothing short of the best examples for its direction.

Bearing this in mind, consider the following statement made by Lenin in the post-revolutionary period....23 (in one of his last articles)

"...we lack sufficient civilisation to enable us to pass straight on to Socialism, although we have the political requisites."

Lenin, then, recognises that his prematurity has left us with a bad, ie underdeveloped, 'uncivilised' example. Nonetheless, though a bad example cannot inspire, it is something we can begin to learn from (as we see below with respect to 'Left-Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder').

Section V

The focus of our analysis has been fixed upon Lenin's failure to distinguish premature action from decisive intervention. There are numerous accounts of Lenin which attempt to provide a version of his prematurity (Carr 24 and Pethybridge 25 come to mind here). However, the most articulate and developed reading of Lenin's prematurity is provided by Lane 26.

Lane attempts to utilise a modification 27 of Talcott Parsons' theory of the social system to analyse Lenin's attempt to institute a communist revolution in Russia in 1917. While it would be unwise to attempt any kind of detailed exposition of Parsons, for the purposes of this discussion we can recall the basic elements of Parsons' characterisation. Parsons views the social system as being composed of four functionally inter-related sub-systems (the so-called A G I L model), the Adaptive sub-system (A), the Goal-Attainment sub-system (G), the Integrative sub-system (I), and the Pattern-Maintenance sub-system (L). Each sub-system is involved in reciprocal exchange transactions with other sub-systems, and these transactions 'balance' such that the social-system as a whole tends towards equilibrium.

Lane's version of Lenin's prematurity argues that it was

impossible to build socialism in Russia in 1917 because the structural 'supports' - or functional pre-requisites - necessary for socialism did not exist. Thus there was no sufficient 'stock of socialist personalities' (sub-system 'L') nor 'a developed and dominant working-class' (sub-system 'I' as modified by Lane - cf note 27), nor 'an advanced political system' (sub-system 'G'), nor finally 'an equivalently developed economy' (sub-system 'A'). The interchanges between the sub-systems were not reciprocal, and thus the system as a whole could not exist in equilibrium.

How are we to respond to Lane's reading? Firstly we ought to recognise an irony of which Lane appears to be ignorant. Lane's analysis is intended to present a case for Lenin to be regarded as an important (hitherto 'unsung' - at least by philosophers/sociologists) - social theorist. Yet the impact of Lane's account 28 is to show not what social theory can learn from Lenin, but what Lenin can learn from social theory (Parsons). However we have a different conception of what Lenin can learn from social theory. While, for Lane, Lenin's prematurity is to be understood as inappropriate strategy in relation to the opportunities afforded by (an underdeveloped) social structure, we say Lenin's prematurity is an inability to orient to principle universally. Our account sees Lenin's deficiency as an inability to draw the distinction, which informs the principled reading of Marx, between decisive intervention and premature action.

Secondly, our relationship to Lane's reading can be exemplified if we consider the following extract from his work where he is attempting to summarise the lessons we should learn from Leninism....29

"Finally, a third objective of this approach is to point to the structural limitations of revolution. Men do not make their history as they please, but under constraints given by the level of productive forces, by the 'stocks' of personality with given class orientations and the cultural conditions they inherit. Many explanations of the 'degeneration' of the Soviet Union emphasise 'external' constraints - the hostile capitalist world framework. These factors are no doubt important, but much more emphasis must be placed on other conditioning factors if the impact and course of revolutionary seizures of power are to be understood.

Lane poses the question of 'degeneration' in terms of either the popular view that this is to be accounted for in terms of 'external' constraints (eg the 'capitalist encirclement' argument), ie external to the Russian social system, or Lane's own view, that this degeneration is related to the internal structure of that system. In our view neither Lane's perspective, nor the alternative view are adequate. We see revolution as orientation to principle in a universal sense. Each of the perspectives referred to by Lane is one-sided whereas a universal, or all-sided, perspective, looks at the relationship of the external to the internal. We argue that Lenin's failure is a failure to orient to principle universally. Lenin's version of the internationalist aspect of revolutionary universalism - the theory of uneven development - is flawed. In Lenin the

internal (Russia) is incapable of relating to (inspiring) the external (other societies, ie especially the societies of Western Europe).

Thirdly, we ought to consider Lane's view that one of the 'achievements' of Lenin is the shift in focus of revolutionaries from the advanced societies to the developing societies. This is emphasised in the following way....30

"Lenin emphasised the capitalist process on a world scale. In considering the impact of the advanced countries on others he turned the centre of gravity in Marxist thought from Europe to the colonial and oppressed peoples; and unlike the introspective, impotent and pessimistic development of most Marxist thought in Western Europe it opened up a new perspective on socialism and revolutionary change in the Third World."

Lane's view here is fundamentally contradictory. While he charges Western European Marxists with introversion, it is precisely introversion which he argues Lenin lacks. Lane's use of Parsons is an attempt to teach Lenin that he was not sufficiently conscious of the internal structure of his own society. Again Lane leaves us with an unpalatable choice between introversion or extraversion. The principled version of revolution requires neither an introverted not an extraverted actor; each is equally partial. In place of these extremes the principled version advocates the mature, all-round actor. For us there is a difference between 'advocating the revolution on a world scale', ie the theory of uneven development, and an understanding of revolution as orientation to principle in a

universal way. Lane's typification of the extraverted actor (Lenin) is probably apt in the sense that the extravert could be expected to act prematurely. We understand revolution not as the premature action of the extravert who wants to run before he can walk, nor the action of the introvert who is reluctant to intervene and acts late, if at all. The only action which can be called revolutionary is the timely (neither premature nor late) intervention of the decisive actor. Decisive intervention can only be represented by the mature or universally conscious actor.

The fourth and final aspect of our relationship to Lane concerns his reading of Parsons. While we may agree with Lane that Parsons is an important contemporary theorist who is unjustly disdained by some sectors of the sociological community, this does not mean that we share his reading of Parsons. Lane's imaginative and insightful account seeks to show the relevance of Parsons' perspective, both to an understanding of the prematurity of Lenin's October revolution, and to the 'functional pre-requisites' for the successful development of a socialist society. However, what Lane fails to pay attention to is the importance of the view developed by Parsons himself concerning not just the actual development of communism from Leninism through Stalinism to the present day but also the possibility of the principles of Marxism ever being embodied in a concrete social system. Parsons' attitude to Marxism qua Marxism is instructive...31

"There are strong forces in all social systems making for commitment to 'utopian' patterns of value-orientation, that is, patterns which are incompatible with the known conditions of effective long-run institutionalisation. Thus it seems fair to say that in contemporary society advocacy of complete abolition of the family, of absolute egalitarianism or of absolute repudiation of coercion, can be placed in this category."

For Parsons, 'complete abolition of the family', 'absolute egalitarianism' and 'absolute repudiation of coercion' are the value-patterns which are to characterise the actor in a communist social system. Thus, irrespective of the prematurity of the October revolution, Parsons finds it difficult to conceive of a social system organised around socialist values (or what he reads as socialist values) being realisable 'in the long run'. Parsons is careful not to make a final judgement on this matter, but the best that can be said is that he is highly sceptical of the search for the 'functional alternatives' necessary to sustain a

(genuinely) socialist systems. In our reading, * Parsons transforms the universalism of Marx into its extreme, ie into absolutism, or totalitarianism. Parsons' view is linked to the 'perfectability of man' attitude to socialism. While Parsons regards Marxism as eliding the distinction between man and an absolute or total being, ie god, we argue that Marxism requires respect for that distinction. In the principled account, 'universal man' is not 'perfect' but is conceived of as mature, developed, and an 'all-round' being.

* I am not here offering anything which aspires to a serious attempt at a fully-blown reading of Parsons which lies outside of the scope of this analysis.

Section VI

The problem of prematurity is partially recognised and elliptically confronted in the later, post-revolutionary phase of Lenin's writing. 'Left-Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder' 32 occupies an important position with respect to this partial recognition. I shall seek to show that this text is a belated call for the virtue of patience in respect of the self-education of the proletariat.

One of the primary concerns of Lenin, in this text, is to evaluate the necessity of compromise. This is accomplished by investigating the relationship between good and bad compromises. A 'bad' conception of compromise is one which permits of compromises on any and every issue. Thus an 'opportunist' has a 'bad' conception of compromise because he is willing to compromise on everything, ie even on issues of principle. However, there is a second, and equally one-sided view of compromise which rejects all compromises on any issue. In opposing/transforming the extremes of compromise is everything and compromise is nothing, Lenin attempts to see the place of compromise, ie to investigate the good of compromise. Essentially, Lenin seeks to distinguish between permissible and necessary compromises (compromises with respect to tactics) and illegitimate and undesirable compromises (compromises on principle).

Lenin sees the impatience of the 'left-wing' communist who is unwilling to make any compromise as the greatest danger to the development of revolution internationally. This tendency is to be viewed in the following way: 38

"The conclusion is clear: to reject compromises 'on principle', to reject the admissibility of compromises in general, no matter of what kind, is childishness, which it is difficult even to take seriously."

Thus, at the point of development in his theorising, when he finds it necessary to review the history of (his) revolution, the big issue is seen as the problem of the lack of patience of the child. What Lenin attempts to do in 'Left-Wing Communism' is to exemplify the work - the patience - which is necessary to transform the impetuous one-sidedness of the child into the all-round maturity of the adult. This text then is really concerned with the necessity of education. The process concerned is the unavoidable lengthy self-education of the proletariat.

What the 'left-wing' communist lacks is patience. He fails to understand the need to recognise the difference between a developed and an underdeveloped proletariat. The left-wing communist's basic mistake is to treat the child (underdeveloped proletariat) as though he were an adult (mature proletariat). A genuine revolutionary recognises that tactics have to be changed (compromises made) depending upon the level of development of the proletariat. Maturity, or all-round development, cannot be

assumed, it has to be produced.

We must consider, then, what is the character of the patience required to educate the proletariat? Firstly, the revolutionary has to be a timely actor, in the sense that he is conscious of the stage of development of the proletariat. Thus.....34

"To attempt in practice today to anticipate this future result of a fully developed, fully stabilised and formed, fully expanded and mature Communism would be like trying to teach higher mathematics to a four-year-old child."

Secondly, the revolutionary has to be aware of the necessity of and desirability of stages of development. Thus the 'backwardness' of the child or the youth in relation to the adult is both inevitable and positive. For the left-wing communist backwardness is something entirely negative, to be rejected, eg as with respect to their attitude to 'reactionariness' in trade unions at phases in their development. Consider Lenin's attitude to youth. The youth is possessed of passionate qualities, of the desire to make a beginning. Youth's vision is however partial, and requires the kind of moderation which can preserve the origin of the youth's passion. This is clarified with respect to Lenin's view of the revolutionary movement in Scotland. 35

"This expresses excellently the temper and point of view of young Communists. This temper is highly gratifying and valuable; we must learn to value it and support it, for without it, it would be hopeless to expect the victory of the proletarian revolution in Great Britain, or in any other country for that matter. People who can give expression to

this temper of the masses, who can rouse such a temper (which is very often dormant, unrealised and unaroused) among the masses, must be valued and every assistance must be given them. And at the same time we must openly and frankly tell them that temper alone is not enough to lead the masses in a great revolutionary struggle, and that such and such mistakes that very loyal adherents of the cause of the revolution are about to commit, or are committing, may damage the cause of the revolution."

So youthfulness is to be neither rejected nor ignored, but transformed and developed. The youth requires training to harness his passion, ie to make desire serve him rather than vice versa. In this context youth requires the patience to learn the strengths of his enemy as a preliminary to confronting him. Youth has to suffer the temptation of (premature) action in order to become strong enough to act decisively.

Thirdly, patience teaches the revolutionary the necessity of developing an engaged rather than an abstracted relationship to conditions. The adolescent displays an abstracted relation to conditions through his impetuosity. Impetuosity, while it correctly sees that self can be a force, presents an unmoderated version of self which is detached from conditions. Patience teaches youth that decisive (really forceful) action requires a version of self which is engaged with other (conditions). Self is a force, yet self exists only in relationship with other forces. Thus, in order to change the world, self also has to change. Self has to flex itself in relation to other if principle is to be enacted - if a revolution is to be created. Patience teaches the revolutionary that tactics must be flexible

in relation to the conditions in the conception of revolution as orientation to principle.

'Left-Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder' demonstrates that Lenin has begun to consider the place of patience, and that he is aware of the necessity of learning the lessons of the first (his) revolution. There is a glimmer of recognition of his own prematurity when he acknowledges that.....36

".....it was easy for Russia, in the specific, historically very unique situation of 1917, to start the socialist revolution, but it will be more difficult for Russia than for the European countries to continue the revolution and bring it to its consummation."

However if we genuinely learn the virtue of patience, then we acknowledge that not only do others have to learn from our experience (ie Western Europeans, North Americans learning from the experience of the Bolshevik revolution) but essentially that the initiator acknowledges and learns from his own mistakes. We can begin to see that this text (Left-Wing Communism) does not represent more than a partially developed recognition of the need for patience if we consider the following....37

"That is why it will be more difficult for Western Europe to start a socialist revolution than it was for us. To attempt to 'circumvent' this difficulty by 'skipping' the difficult job of utilising reactionary parliaments for revolutionary purposes is absolutely childish."

The irony of this observation lies in the fact that this fails to recognise that Lenin's prematurity itself amounted to 'circumventing a difficult job'. The theory of uneven development does indeed itself amount to a rationalisation for 'skipping' a difficult job, ie a stage of development.

Section VII

To conclude this chapter it is appropriate to gather together what we have learned of Lenin's version of the relationship of speech to language, theory to practice, and to consider not just the origins of this analysis, but also its consequences.

We have attempted to trace Lenin's relationship to his tradition. We can develop this by considering the following extract where Lenin attempts to encapsulate the meaning of Marxism.....38

"There is no trace of an attempt on Marx's part to make up a utopia, to indulge in idle guess-work about what cannot be known. Marx treated the question of communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the development of, say, a new biological variety, once he knew that it had originated in such and such a way and was changing in such and such a definite direction."

Thus, for Lenin, there are only two choices, utopianism and science. This reading of theory (Marx) displays a tendency to transform theory into a method (a method which can be applied to any topic). However, the problem of method is that it risks forgetting theory's (Marx's) vision. Converting theory into method fails to preserve what inspired Marx's analysis. To see Marxism as method is to (see?) speech as soul-less - to see theory as uncentred or spurious. Lenin thus courts the possibility of producing speech which cannot recapture that for the sake of which it speaks - nihilistic theorising.

One way to focus upon Lenin's tendency to transform theory (marxism) into method is to consider his well-known advocacy of 'Scientific Management' in the post-revolutionary period. 'Scientific Management' refers to the body of ideas developed by the American work-study engineer, Frederick Taylor, hence the synonym 'Taylorism'. Taylorism combined an analysis of ergonomics with a theory of management - the linking of wages to individual rates of production. Lenin called Taylorism 'the last word in capitalism' and argued that....39

"..its greatest scientific achievements (lie) in the field of analysing mechanical motions during work, in the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, in the working out of correct methods of work, and in the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc."

If we evaluate Lenin's views here in the context of the transformation of Marxism into method - into a set of rules, where Marxism 'allies itself with the most progressive methods available' we can begin to investigate his problem. We have argued above (Chapter 3) that a 'good' rule is one which enables us to embody or enact principle. What, then, does Lenin's attitude to 'Scientific Management' tell us of his conception of the relation of rule to principle, of speech to language? Does Taylorism embody (the spirit of) principle (Marxism) or does it violate principle? The answer to this question can only be that Taylorism violates principle decisively. If we return to Marx's view of man (see Chapter 1) as a universal producer - the

inspiration of Marx's theorising - we can see that there are a number of respects in which 'Taylorism' is an explicit violation of Marx's vision of man.

1. While the actor in Marx's vision of man is seen as an oriented, ie other-oriented, or SOCIAL being, Taylorism views the worker in explicitly individualistic terms. This is reflected in Tylor's view of an appropriate wages system necessitating individual wages being directly tied to individual rate of production. The worker is treated as though he exists in a social vacuum by this perspective.
2. While the actor in Marx's vision is conceived of as an all-round or universal producer, Taylorism insists upon the maximum degree of specialisation, or fragmentation, of work.
3. While Marx views man the producer as a conscious, self-creative, self-reflective being who initiates and controls his history, Taylorism advocates that the initiative and self-control of the worker's activity be ceded to specialists - managers, engineers and economists. Taylorism minimises the extent to which the worker can control the work process.

Lenin's views here indicate that rule has become detached from principle in his theorising. By offering science as the only alternative to utopianism, Lenin has forgotten the force of Marx's vision which shows us a universal view of man which is not abstract (Utopian).

We can further develop our investigation of Lenin's concept of the relation of theory to practice when we consider his 'Philosophical Notebooks' where he argues that....40

"Practice is higher than theoretical knowledge, for it has....the dignity of...immediate actuality."

So what theory lacks in relation to practice is immediacy. If, as we recalled in Chapter 3, 'there can be no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory', then Lenin's theorising must be seen as an attempt to remedy its lack of immediacy, ie to make his theory represent a powerful practice. That Lenin should argue that the international revolution would be 'sparked' by the Russian revolution goes further to underscore the importance of immediacy. However we must recall firstly that immediate action is not to be confused with decisive intervention. An immediate or spontaneous response cannot guarantee a real change. Secondly, immediacy resonates with the kind of spontaneity which Lenin so roundly criticised in terrorism and reformism. Significantly immediacy as a criterion would tend to indicate a preference for premature over timely action, since timely or decisive intervention requires us to restrain the temptation of the youth to make a spontaneous response.

Lenin's theorising has thus disengaged practice from theory. He has a disembodied conception of practice, in the sense that practice can no longer embody principle. We might then consider

what are the consequences of detaching theory and practice. There are two likely extremes given this disembodiment, this failure to embody principle universally in practice. Firstly, practice could be confused with (taken to equal) theory. In this case, Stalin rule is confused with principle, is taken to equal principle. Here rule is re-established in an unprincipled sense. (This is obliquely grasped by Parsons who argues in 'The Social System' 41 that Stalin represents the re-equilibration of communism at the cost of socialist values.) The second extreme (Trotsky) is the attempt to re-assert principle. This risks the fetishisation of principle. Here the attempt to recapture principle is likely to be abstracted, ie risks a Utopian conception of universalism. Marx's vision of a revolutionary movement which can be universal without being abstract is off the agenda in the immediate aftermath of Lenin's theorising.

CHAPTER 5

Section I

In this chapter we shall be investigating the relationship of Stalin and Trotsky to Lenin's redirection of Marx's principled concept of revolution. In the preceding two chapters we have argued that Lenin has detached theory (principle) from practice (rule). This detachment, or disembodiment, is related to the prematurity of Lenin's perspective upon revolution. While Lenin acknowledged, with Marx, that the revolution had to be international in its character if principle was to be embodied universally, Lenin's theorising (the idea of the uneven development of capitalism) failed to integrate the particular (the Russian revolution) within the universal (the international revolution). Lenin's prematurity thus made likely a further bifurcation between elements which belong together in (Marx's) principled account - the particular and universal moments in the revolutionary process.

We shall argue that there are two extremes, two possibilities dialectically related to the movement Lenin has created within the revolutionary tradition.

Firstly, (STALIN) rule, having become detached from principle, could be confused with principle. Here rule is taken to be equivalent to principle. As we shall see this version of revolution converts principle into a dogma. This view represents a particularisation of Marx's universal perspective upon revolution.

Secondly, while Marx's conception of principle was an engaged and dialectical one, Lenin's detachment of principle from rule produces the possibility of an abstracted conception of universalism (Trotsky). Here principle tends to become fetishised. This version appears closer to the principled tradition, yet the abstraction of its concept of universalism tends towards the Utopian.

Both extremes are dialectically interconnected to Lenin's prematurity. Each presents a different (and flawed) resolution of Lenin's dis-integration of the particular and the universal in revolution. Stalin tends towards particularism and Trotsky towards an abstracted universalism.

Section II

We commence our investigation of Stalin's relationship to the revolutionary tradition by considering how this is viewed in the extant literature. One striking feature of much of this literature is that it tends to focus almost exclusively upon Stalin's relationship to Lenin, and largely ignores Stalin's relationship to Marx. (This point is of significance when we come to consider the difference between a principled account and conventional accounts of Stalin (see Section III of this chapter). Marx is neutralised as a significant figure in Stalin's tradition. This can be seen when we note that where Marx is mentioned, it is within the context of the euphemistic concept of 'Marxism-Leninism' which actually refers not to Marx at all, but to Lenin's version of Marx.

While the literature evaluating Stalin's place in the revolutionary tradition is extensive ¹ and varied in its assessment, all tend to concentrate on the extent to which Stalin represents continuity or discontinuity with respect to Lenin. Concretely, almost all versions recognise both continuities and discontinuities with respect to detailed aspects of policy. However what I am concerned with here is the extent to which these interpretations view Stalin as representing a continuity or discontinuity with the principle of Lenin's theorising.

The continuity version of Stalin's relationship to Lenin's theorising unifies writers who might be thought otherwise to represent diverse political positions. Both critics of 'totalitarianism' and Stalinists (including the new apologists for Stalin such as Elleinstein) are represented within this view.

A 'totalitarian' view of Lenin and Stalin argues that Stalin simply extended what is originally attributable to Lenin. Here Lenin is seen as having a repressive rather than a liberatory concept of universalism which inevitably degenerates into total control rather than total liberation of the people. Kolakowski, for example, argues that.....2

"Lenin was the creator of the totalitarian doctrine and of the totalitarian state in embryo."

Likewise, as we saw in Chapter 3, Robert Conquest viewed Lenin as a totalitarian autocrat, and goes to some length to argue that both Lenin and Stalin should be seen as 'monsters'. Perhaps the most outspoken exponent of this perspective is Meyer who argues that.....3

"Stalin's way of looking at the world, his professed aims, his conception of the tasks facing the communist state....are entirely Leninist....His stress on the primacy of the party and the power struggle, his preoccupation with problems of economic construction and cultural transformation, his readiness to manipulate men and institutions, and his ruthlessness in implementing policies - in all these traits Stalin had trod in Lenin's footsteps."

The continuity version of Stalin stresses that Stalin simply developed the totalitarianism made manifest by Lenin. In this perspective Stalin is seen as an extreme development of the potential inherent in the autocracy imputed to Lenin. The clearest statement of this aspect of Stalinism is made by Cohen

4

"...Stalinism was excess....It was not, for example, merely coercive peasant policies, but a virtual civil war against the peasantry; not merely police repression, or even civil war style terror, but a holocaust by terror that victimised tens of millions of people for twenty-five years; not merely a Thermidorian revival of nationalistic tradition, but an almost fascist-like chauvinism; not merely a leader cult, but deification of a despot. Excesses were the real essence of historical Stalinism, and they are what really require explanation."

So Stalin is viewed as an inevitable, and extreme, version of Lenin. The best version of this is that it is arguing that Stalin represents the excess of rule. In our perspective this connotes rule which is arbitrary, ie rule which has become detached from principle (see below). While we might agree that Stalin represents the (un-principled) excess of rule, these perspectives allow us little in the way of analysis of the grounds of this extremeness. These perspectives tend to face towards personality (in Conquest's case 'monstrous' personalities) and away from Stalin's theorising.

A more sophisticated version of the continuity view of Stalin is that of Gouldner 5. Gouldner stresses that what Lenin and

Stalin shared was a 'voluntaristic' theory of politics combined with a theory of economic development dependent upon technological change. This perspective argues that Lenin created a revolutionary party in a largely peasant society with the result that Stalinism, as a development of this, effectively represented the leadership of an 'urban-centred power elite' (the party bureaucracy) over a hostile peasant community. Hence Stalin's rule is to be seen as a form of 'internal colonialism' created out of the Leninist conception of the centralised party. Gouldner could have made a telling point about the connection between Stalin's terror and the prematurity of the Russian revolution (ie that the absence of an advanced, dominant and conscious proletariat makes socialism impossible to achieve, and encourages a revolutionary party to revert to force, as Marx had pointed out with reference to the Jacobins). However Gouldner concentrates instead upon rural/urban conflicts, and while he sees the peasantry as the problem, he fails to see the (advanced) proletariat as the solution. Gouldner's failure here is a failure which looks exclusively at the relationship of Lenin to Stalin in isolation from their relation to Marx.

Perhaps one of the most influential variants of the continuity perspective emanates from a former (or someone who claims not now to be) Stalinist, the French Communist Party theoretician, Jean Elleinstein 6. Elleinstein seeks to replace the 'subjectivist' explanations of Stalinism (ie the 'cult of personality' view of writers such as Conquest) with an 'objectivist' account which

stresses the role of historical conditions 'making Stalinism objectively inevitable'. Elleinstein argues that the historical conditions inherited from Lenin's October Revolution made Stalinism the only possible outcome. These 'historical conditions' were firstly and most importantly for Elleinstein the 'capitalist encirclement' of the Soviet Union, the economic underdevelopment of that country, and the political and industrial backwardness of its proletariat. Stalinism was the inevitable outcome of 'objective conditions' - the standard view of most Eurocommunist parties towards Stalinism. We might first note that this is a form of argument which does not resonate well with Marx. To see conditions as 'ruling' or determining is peculiarly un-dialectical and deterministic. No matter how severely restrictive the objective conditions, Marx saw man as active or engaged in his relationship to conditions.

Elleinstein sees Stalin as a true inheritor of the Leninist tradition, thus....7

".....a socialist economy and society were born of the October Revolution and of Stalin's policy....At the same time totalitarian methods were used."

Thus Stalin 'developed Socialism, even though he proceeded in a despotic manner'. This nihilism towards means is something which Stalinism shares with Maoism (see Chapter 6). For Elleinstein, then, Stalinism is in accord with the principles of Leninism; it being simply the case that unfavourable 'historical conditions' obliged Stalin to be barbarous in his methods. What seems to be

lost in this version of continuity is Stalin himself as theorist (although there is a reason for this distortion - see section III of this chapter where we characterise Stalin as a repeater, ie as someone who, on the surface, seeks simply to reflect Lenin's speech, in which case, concretely, Stalin seems to lose his distinctiveness).

What unites Stalinists' views (whether old or new, like Elleinstein) of Stalin is their understanding of what socialism is. They tend to understand socialism as a form of society where private property is abolished within the means of production. While this is an important precondition for the transition to socialism it is not sufficient on its own to bring about socialism. If we recall Marx's discussion, production itself is defined as being broader than a simply economic function. The abolition of all forms of alienation, the development of a universal consciousness among the proletariat are the dynamic forces of revolution as developed in the principled account of Marx. Despotism might conceivably bring about the abolition of some (though not all) forms of private property within the means of production, but it is incapable of producing a genuine socialist revolution. An economic transformation (abolition of private property in the means of production) or a partial change is not the same as a universal or socialist transformation.

Within the discontinuity view of Stalin's relationship to Lenin, the most widely known reading is that of Roy Medvedev. As with

some writers in the continuity tradition, Medvedev argues that the origins of Stalinism are to be located in the 'perverted' and 'criminal' personality of Stalin. The distortions of the Stalinist era are located, for Medvedev,, in the obsessive and pathological personality of Stalin himself. However this is precisely what accounts for Stalin's total discontinuity with Lenin. Hence Medvedev argues that....8

"It was an historical accident that Stalin, the embodiment of all the worst elements in the Russian revolutionary movement, came to power after Lenin, the embodiment of all that was best."

Furthermore, if we were left in any doubt whatsoever as to where Medvedev stands on this, he has the following to say in his latest work, when evaluating the competing claims of the continuity view.....9

"....there is no continuity between Leninism and Stalinism; they are essentially different political phenomena sharing a common "Marxist" terminology. Stalin's policies were in no way a reflection of Lenin's objectives."

Many of the criticisms we made of Conquest apply with equal force to Medvedev. His fixation upon Stalin's personality obliges us to ignore what is essential - Stalin's theorising. Stalin's barbarism does deserve to be thoroughly, and morally, condemned, but it is just this excessiveness which places upon the analyst of Stalinism the responsibility to concentrate upon the essential, and not to be deflected by the spurious, no matter how spectacular that spuriousness might be. That is, we ought to be

able to show that his barbarism is grounded in his theorising, and not simply be dazzled by his excesses.

The most sophisticated variant of the discontinuity view is provided by the political economist, Ernest Mandel, whose perspective is highly derivative of Trotsky's early critique of Stalin 10. Mandel, citing Trotsky, argues that the sustained degeneration of Russia in the Stalinist period was due to two interlinked tendencies. Firstly, an underdevelopment of the forces of production gave rise to a political and cultural backwardness which encouraged Stalinism to reverse some of the gains made by Lenin (eg the restoration of the family and the renewal of sexual inequalities initiated by Stalin). Secondly the growth of a bureaucratic stratum which controlled party, state and society in this period. This second feature, the growth of 'bureaucratic deformation' is the significant element in this analysis, as is indicated in the following extract....11

"Stalinism is the totality of political institutions, structures of rule, methods of governing and planning which secure the monopoly of power of the Soviet bureaucracy and which safeguards its privileges...This is the only explanation of Stalinism that conforms to the method of historical materialism...the social category of the bureaucracy is the key to explaining and understanding the 'Stalinist' phenomenon."

While the Trotsky/Mandel perspective is undoubtedly the most sophisticated variant of the discontinuity perspectives, it is important to subject it to principled critique. We might begin by noting that while Stalin may have been responsible for most of

the rejections or inversions of Marxist principle, he was not the initiator of all of them. We have already seen (see Chapter 4 above) how Lenin was forced to concede to the necessity of using bureaucrats and specialists in science and administration, for example. Most importantly we have to recognise that both the low-level of productive forces and the dependence upon bureaucracy (privileged specialists) are the outcome of, are the degeneration of, Lenin's premature revolution. Both Trotsky and Mandel stop short of this recognition. (Trotsky is particularly obsessive about this - in this 'History of The Russian Revolution' he goes at length to argue that the revolution in Russia was not premature - supporting this argument with data about the rapid growth in the aggregate numbers of the proletariat. While this is 'spitting in the wind' on its own terms, since at all times prior to 1917 the proletariat was a tiny minority in relation to the peasantry, the more important principled point is that the really significant force - the development of a consciousness, a level of culture and awareness of the proletariat - had not been developed.) To fail to recognise that 'the low level of productive forces', the 'low cultural level of the country', and 'the growth of the bureaucratic stratum' are related to the prematurity of Lenin's revolution is a serious error.

One of the most comprehensive views of Stalin's relation to Lenin is to be found in the work of Lane, referred to in the previous chapter. Lane's primary concern is to present a 'synthesis' of

most of the major critiques of Stalin. However, as we shall see, he has a somewhat peculiar version of what a synthesis is. Basically, Lane borrows elements of explanation from both the continuity and discontinuity views of Stalin's relationship to Lenin. Thus, Stalin shared much with Lenin, according to Lane, as is evident in the following extract....12

"...Stalin's ideology and world view had an affinity with Lenin's in method and orientation. Both men shared a similar approach to Marxism; they accepted Engels' interpretation of historical and dialectical materialism; they emphasised the constraining effects of laws external to man; politically they shared similar views - they saw Soviet Russia as threatened by an international world order of capitalism; and they recognised the necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat; economically they both stressed the importance of developing the level of productive forces and the need to borrow and copy the advanced techniques of the West...."

However Stalin differed from Lenin in that....13

"Lenin...advocated direct forms of political participation and greater equality. These were dropped under Stalin."

Lane's view is really not so much a synthesis as an eclectic collection of continuities and discontinuities in Stalin's relationship to Lenin, with the balance favouring the continuity argument. While Lane is superior to many writers on the topic of Stalin's relationship to Lenin, in that he sees the need to include Trotsky as a significant theorist in that relationship, his understanding of Stalin and Trotsky's relationship to Lenin's redirection of the Marxist tradition is simplistic and eclectic.

Thus he avers....14

"My argument has been to attempt to show a continuity in some respects in policy running from Lenin through Trotsky to Stalin. This continuity is essentially the adaptation of Marxism to be an ideology legitimating the construction of a type of industrial and 'modern' society."

and furthermore....15

"While his critique of Stalin was penetrating, Trotsky's own position when in power showed many assumptions common to Lenin and Stalin."

How are we to view the literature concerning Stalin's relationship to his tradition? Firstly we should recognise that most of the material we have considered fails to consider in any serious sense the relationship of both Lenin and Stalin to Marx. As we have seen (Chapters 3 & 4) any simple identification of Marx and Lenin's theorising is misplaced and I shall go on to attempt to show that we must seek to relate Stalin to the principled reading of Marx. The most serious attempt to ground Stalin in an understanding not just of Lenin, but also of Marx, is provided by the Trotsky/Mandel perspective. However I shall seek to show below that Trotsky's perspective upon Marx does not match up to a principled account, especially with regard to his conception of universalism. Secondly, we must understand that the continuity and discontinuity perspectives tend to represent the weakness of a rule-bound conception of revolution. Thus the continuity version tends to convert Marxism into a more or less inflexible method - into a dogma. This view tends to assume a

dislocation between theory and practice (rather than investigate that dislocation) and tends to transform language - 'Marxism-Leninism' into speech. Therefore this perspective tends to present a one-dimensional view of the theorising of Stalin and Trotsky. This distraction from what is essential, ie primarily their theorising and their praxis - takes various forms. In relatively unrigorous variants (eg Conquest), Stalin's theorising is effectively ignored by concentrating on his personality to the exclusion of almost all else. In the sophisticated variants of the continuity view (eg Lane) theory is downgraded by considering practice as both isolated from and more significant than theory. As we have seen (citations 14 & 15) Lane is arguing that Marxism/Leninism seen as dogma, or as rule, produces a linearity or congruence in practice/policy despite detailed disagreements upon the interpretation of Marxism/Leninism. The continuity view of Stalin either ignores Trotsky (Conquest) or presents us with a one-dimensional view of his relationship to the Marxist tradition (Lane).

On the other hand, the discontinuity view of Stalin simply presents a different sort of rule-bound reading. The unsophisticated variants of this view (Medvedev) seek to turn away from Stalin's theorising, out of a sense of outrage at his practice. Stalin becomes a featureless theorist - he is reduced to sheer contingency - a horrendous 'historical accident' to quote Medvedev. More sophisticated variants of the discontinuity perspective (eg Trotsky/Mandel) while not ignoring Stalin

effectively produce a one-dimensional view of his theorising in the sense that they fail to see that Stalin's theorising and his praxis is connected not just to conditions (the burgeoning party bureaucracy) but also that Stalin's excesses do have a relationship to the potential inherent in Lenin's prematurity.

Section III

To begin to develop a principled account of Stalin's place in the revolutionary tradition we can proceed by first making a critique of an element of the continuity perspective, as it is developed by one of its most able exponents - Lane. We may recall (citation 12) that Lane argues that, despite certain differences between Lenin and Stalin, on balance there is a greater area of continuity and agreement between the two. Thus Lane goes on to catalogue a long list of political, economic and philosophical areas upon which he asserts we can observe 'agreement' between Lenin and Stalin. However what is glossed, or taken for granted in Lane's discussion is just what is the character of Stalin's 'agreement' with Lenin. Unless we know the character of this 'agreement' we are in no position to make any sound judgement about Stalin's relation to Lenin, or the revolutionary tradition. What does it mean to say that Stalin's theorising is basically in agreement with that of Lenin? We should here direct our attention to two texts where more than anywhere else Stalin confronts his relationship to the tradition of Leninism, ie to 16 "The Foundations of Leninism" and 17 'Problems of Leninism'. These writings stand out from most of the rest of Stalin's work in a number of ways. For example. while Stalin (unlike Lenin and Trotsky) has a somewhat wooden and uninspiring style, and a heavy-handed sense of polemic, 'The Foundations of Leninism' has a certain superficial sparkle which is lacking when compared

with, say, his 'Economic Problems of the USSR' or 'Marxism and Linguistics'. These former texts which are concerned ostensibly with understanding the principles of Leninism appear to be much more impressive than they actually are. What is crucial here is to recognise that 'Foundations of Leninism' simply rephrases large tracts from Lenin's writing. They amount to bare-faced repetition and plagiarism. (This does not mean to say that all of Stalin's work is a repetition of all of Lenin's. There is an important area - the idea of 'socialism in one country' - where despite the pretence of repetition, repetition is not possible - see below.) Consider, for example, what Stalin has to say of the role of the Party in 'Foundations of Leninism' (Section VIII of that work 18). This section simply rephrases what Lenin has to say in 'What is to be Done?', 'State and Revolution' and 'Left-Wing Communism - an Infantile Disorder'.

So 'agreement' between Stalin and Lenin really means that Stalin repeats Lenin's speech. Thus Stalin's version of embodying the principle of Leninism is simply to repeat what Lenin had to say - to reflect Lenin's speech. Repetition as a mode of orientation to tradition implies a preference for rule over principle. Stalin confuses Lenin's speech with language (principle). What Stalin has effected is a distortion which treats rule as though it were principle. Stalin's mode of orientation to tradition is in contradistinction to the genuinely revolutionary, or principled, mode of orientation. The principled mode of orientation requires dialectic rather than rule. Dialectic

provides a mode of orientation to tradition which recognises that the theorist speaking at a later period in the development of revolution (ie Stalin with respect to the communist revolution) has to find new ways (new speech) which can preserve orientation to principle. Repetition simply converts principle into a dogma - the inevitable result of a view which confuses principle with rule.

Seeing his theorising in terms of the idea of repetition makes certain features of the literature on Stalin more comprehensible. With regard to the discontinuity perspective we can begin to see the sense of Medvedev's notion (citation 9) that Lenin and Stalin share a 'common Marxist terminology'. What this really means is that Stalin's speech seeks to be a mirror-image of that of Lenin. Thus a rule-bound conception of orientation to tradition (Stalin) fails to see a fundamental distinction between the original and its image.

With regard to the continuity perspective, one can understand the ease (too great an ease) with which writers like Elleinstein can point to what looks like a fundamental commonality of understanding between Lenin and Stalin. Stalin's repetition casts a surface reflection of its object (Lenin) which presents a concretely impressive correspondence. The task of a principled analysis is to investigate the distortion introduced by repetition while attempting to conceive of the desire which can produce repetition as a mode of orientation to tradition.

Furthermore we can provide some conception for a phenomenon noted by both continuity and discontinuity perspectives - the seeming randomness or arbitrariness of Stalinist brutality. In both perspectives this randomness is attributed to the vicissitudes of Stalin's quasi-schizophrenic personality (compare the accounts, already referred to, of Conquest and Medvedev). We see this arbitrariness as an outcome, not of personality, but of the fact that Stalin's theorising represents the (re-)assertion of rule in isolation from principle. Arbitrary rule is, in a sense, an uncentred, unprincipled, and hence volatile concept of governance/rule.

Stalin's arbitrariness - the lack of connectedness to principle of his theorising throws some light upon what is regarded as Stalin's major theoretical innovation - the doctrine of 'Socialism in One Country'. Initially Stalin's attitude to internationalism seeks to mirror that of Lenin, as this extract from the first edition (1924) of 'Problems of Leninism' 19 indicates....

"To overthrow the bourgeoisie, the efforts of a single country suffice; the history of our own revolution attests to this. For the definitive victory of socialism, for the organisation of socialist production, the efforts of a single country, especially a peasant country like Russia, are no longer sufficient; the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are required. Such are in general the characteristic features of the Leninist theory of the proletarian revolution."

Significantly, this passage was summarily excluded in all subsequent editions of the work. The arbitrariness of Stalin's concept to repetition allows him, comfortably, to ignore what is inconvenient. Because rule lacks a centre - because it is unprincipled - rule change becomes less than problematic.

The doctrine of 'socialism in one country' in essence argues that socialism can be completely achieved within the walls of one nation. We shall argue that this is a clear violation or abandonment of the concept of universal/socialist transformation. However let it suffice to note here one consequence of the ideology of 'socialism in one country'; 'Internationalism' is reduced to the defence of one national proletariat - the proletariat of the Soviet Union. The concept of socialism in one country reduced the task of all other national proletariats to the role of aiding the 'embattled' and 'encircled' 'bastion of communism', ie the Soviet Union. In short, internationalism is aborted, is transformed into a narrowly focussed nationalism. What Stalin has achieved is a particularisation of the concept of revolution.

Let us now consider Stalin's particularisation of the idea of revolution in relation to the tradition of revolutionary theorising.

We can begin by locating Stalin's particularisation with respect to Marx. In Chapters One and Two we argued that the principled

reading of Marx revealed that socialism was fundamentally based upon the development of a 'positive' universalism - the creation of the universal individual. Thus any conception of the revolution which is based upon a narrow nationalism is absurd, unprincipled and self-defeating. Just as capitalism creates a 'negative' universalism in the sense that it creates an international and finally world-based proletariat, so the 'positive' universalism of communism is unthinkable and unattainable if confined within the walls of one nation - however 'embattled', 'encircled' and 'central' that nation-state might be. Here we might simply recall Marx's insistence upon the internationalist character of universalism 20

"....communism is only possible as the act of the dominant people 'all at once' and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with communism....

The proletariat can thus only exist world-historically, just as communism: its activity can only have a 'world-historical' existence. This is the world-historical existence of individuals, ie existence of individuals which is directly linked up with world history."

Far from representing a progression, the particularisation of the revolution amounts to a regression. Stalin's regression amounts to a de-humanisation of the revolution in the sense that the creation of the universal individual is replaced by the preservation of the Soviet state. Thus the state itself - its preservation and ossification - becomes the principle in the Stalinist concept of praxis. Repetition in Stalin is thus deeply

an inversion - replacing or substituting an orientation to the image (speech) for an orientation to the original (language).

If we now turn to Stalin's relationship to Lenin's redirection of the principled view of revolution, it is necessary firstly to indicate Stalin's extremeness in relation to Lenin. While Lenin's prematurity dislocated the integrity of the particular (Russian revolution) with the universal (world revolution), Lenin never lost sight of internationalism of the revolution as an aspiration. At all times he was aware that the Russian revolution could never produce socialism particularistically. Nowhere is there evidence to suggest that he conceived that socialism could be completed in one nation. Furthermore he had a fundamentally different notion of teaching/inspiration to Stalin. As we saw in chapter 4, Lenin considered that although all national communist parties could learn something from the experience of the Russian revolution, he recognised that different lessons could be learned depending upon the conditions of the specific national proletariat. That is, Lenin was not abstract in this sense - that he recognised that revolution as principle had to be oriented to in different ways depending upon the development of forces in different nations. Stalin, however, is utterly abstract with regard to his concept of teaching/inspiration. In 'Problems of Leninism' he argues that the Soviet form of party organisation ('dictatorship of the proletariat') should be seen as....21

"....the international doctrine of the proletarians of all lands which is suitable and obligatory for all countries without exception, including those where capitalism is developed."

What Stalin is recommending again is repetition, imitation, reflection.

A further aspect of Stalin's abstraction lies in the consequence of the doctrine of 'socialism in one country'. If socialism can be completed within one country, and if it can be completed in backward Russia, why not all the more so in 'advanced' Britain, or 'advanced' Germany, or in the USA and so on? Stalin's abstraction atomises the universalism of the principled account of revolution. Revolution seems to have no connection with the state of development of the proletariat, or with conditions. The doctrine that socialism can be constructed and completed within any one society makes socialism itself an abstraction disconnected from possibility.

Stalin is best characterised as one extreme or one excess of Lenin. The abstracted particularism of Stalin is rooted in Lenin's premature concept of revolution which failed to integrate the particular (Russian) within the universal (world) revolution. However in contradistinction to both the continuity and discontinuity views we view Stalin dialectically in relation to his tradition. Stalin displays but one (abstracted particularism) extreme response to the prematurity of Leninism, this is related to another extreme - the abstracted universalism of Leon Trotsky.

Section IV

There is a strong concrete sense in which Trotsky appears almost as personal embodiment of universal, or all-round development. All commentators on Trotsky - even his sternest critics - recognise an element of Faustian genius in the range of talent he displays. Perhaps even more than Lenin, and certainly much more so than Stalin (who appears philistine by comparison), Trotsky applied his communism thoroughly to a spectacularly broad range of issues.

Trotsky is probably best known for his massively detailed and impressively argued 3-volume 'History of the Russian Revolution'. Of this work, a not always sympathetic critic, Irving Howe, has the following to say: 23

" 'The History of the Russian Revolution'...is surely Trotsky's masterpiece, the single greatest work of history in the Marxist vein."

Yet Trotsky also produced biographies of Lenin (uncompleted), Stalin 24, and, of course, his own autobiography. 25 (The real significance of Trotsky's felt need - which Lenin did not share - to ^{be} both historian and biographer of the revolution - guardian of its tradition - is discussed below. The current discussion serves merely to underscore the apparent all-round range of Trotsky's talents.) Furthermore Trotsky was both a gifted theorist of literature and a literary critic. His view of art is most

coherently expressed in 'Literature and Revolution' 26. Trotsky sees art and culture as having a degree of autonomy and independence from material conditions - the best art 'does not copy reality in empirical detail'. His view of art has a verve, wit and soulfulness which contrasts with the deadeningly mechanical view of art imposed by Stalin - who sees art - as he consistently sees everything else - as a repetition or reflection or copy of material reality - with a heroic gloss. In addition to these skills, Trotsky was a gifted strategist who first organised the Red Army and then led it to victory in the civil war. Such was the multiplicity of his talents.

In order to deepen our understanding of Trotsky's version of universalism, we ought to recall from Chapters one and two that Marx's principled understanding of revolution required a dialectically engaged concept of universalism. Any concept of universalism which existed 'solely in the mind', ie abstracted universalism was to be rejected as Utopian. So how does Trotsky's universalism relate to Marx's understanding?

We can begin by noting that there is a strong sense of Trotsky's theorising being 'ahead of its time'. This is a difficult concept to be precise about, though many of the critiques of Trotsky, especially those of Howe already referred to, and the most developed, that of Knei-Paz, allude to this in an elliptical way. If we consider two brief examples which are icons of the notion of Trotsky's being 'ahead of his time' perhaps we can

advance our analysis.

The first example I wish to consider is Trotsky's set of essays published under the title 'Problems of Everyday Life'. 28 In essence these essays address the notion that socialism should be more advanced than capitalism not just in a material and political sense, but also in a moral sense. Whilst some of the discussion in this text is hectoring or patronising in tone, important issues are analysed. Most importantly the debates of modernists are pre-figured (especially feminists) in this text. Thus, Trotsky opens up the debate about the relationship between the personal and the political - arguing that the two ought to stand not as totally distinct spheres, but as mutually reciprocal and self-reinforcing. In particular he raises the issue of the necessity for a socialist revolution to aid the liberation of women. Thus he argues that.....29

"The revolution would be no revolution...if it did not help women, doubly and triply enslaved, on to the path of personal and social development."

Now I am not making over-ambitious claims for Trotsky being totally pro-feminist, and I do recognise that there are contradictions in his espousal of female emancipation. The key point, though, is to recognise that more than anyone else, Trotsky is pre-figuring the debate of modernists. However we ought to make two points about this example. Firstly, although he attempts to open up a discussion about the relation between the personal and the political, he has almost nothing to say

about his own personal life, ie this is largely an impersonal text. (For a more detailed view of Trotsky's impersonality see below). Secondly, although he sees female emancipation as a desirable aspiration for the socialist revolution, he provides no praxis for this discussion, ie he gives us no means of seeing how the principle he is discussing can be embodied; ie in short we can begin to see that this aspect of his universalism remains abstract rather than engaged.

The second example I wish to consider is his 'Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution', 30 written towards the end point of his career. In this text he considers a particularly difficult problem - the problem of developing a movement from reformist politics to revolutionary politics within an advanced capitalist society (the United States) which possessed nevertheless one of the most weakly organised and internally divided proletariats. What is striking about his analysis is that it seems much more relevant to the situation of advanced capitalist societies with relatively strongly developed proletariats TODAY rather than to the United States in the thirties. Thus Trotsky assumes a relatively high level of consciousness amongst the US proletariat, overestimates the degree of trade union organisation and solidarity and underestimates (though partially acknowledging) the force of racial, regional and political differences within that proletariat. His suggestions about the movement from a strong reformist party (what he calls a 'Labour Party') to a

revolutionary communist party (what he calls a 'Socialist Workers' Party) seem to me to be more appropriate to a situation such as exists in France at the moment where there exists a relatively strongly organised proletariat with a reformist socialist party in power and greater potential for the advanceability of militant transitional demands. The important point, however, about this example is to show that he over-anticipates in his analysis. His discussion in the 'Transitional Programme' is abstract, both with respect to time and with respect to place. His theorising here is not engaged. To say that he is 'ahead of his time' is really to say that he is abstract with respect to history. Ironically, this is recognised by certain modernists with respect to sectarian Trotskyists, who a leading socialist-feminist, Juliet Mitchell, describes as being characterised by....31

"a gray timelessness"

What is being referred to here is a kind of extreme Trotskyism which considers that objective conditions are over-ripe for revolution - hence committing the familiar abstract error of considering that a revolution is permanently available.

One common view which seems to unite critics of many different perspectives is that Trotsky was prone to 'oscillations' in his perspective. Irving Howe, for example, argues that....

"Grand theories, extreme oscillations...were temptations that Trotsky could not always resist."

Oscillating between extreme positions is indicative of the indecisiveness of the vacillator - who has an abstracted - not fully engaged - relationship to principle. A good example of Trotsky's vacillation can be identified in his view of what attitude the Bolshevik Party should take to the War with Germany when the Party came to power in 1917. A group called the 'Internationalist Bolsheviks' supported continuing the war in order to aid the internationalisation of the revolution - particularly aiding the German proletariat. The other extreme was Lenin's position which favoured ending the war in order to prevent the Russian revolution from becoming crushed. Trotsky - attracted by both extremes - argued in favour of the slogan 'neither war nor peace'. 33 Since Russia was at war already, Trotsky's vacillation is absurd - there were only two alternatives and decisiveness is what was required. Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter 4, Trotsky vacillated on the question of the role of the party in relation to the proletariat. In his early work Trotsky argues that Lenin's insistence upon centralisation of power and the vanguard role of the party would deprive the Russian proletariat of its initiative. He claimed that the unwelcome result of this process would be the substitution of party for proletariat, central committee for party, and finally dictator for central committee. Yet, as Knei-Paz 34 has pointed out, by 1917 Lenin had accepted the vanguard role of the

party and the fact that the party 'must continue substituting itself (ie for the proletariat) in the economic and social revolution'.

If abstraction is an excessive form of generality, then one risk of abstracted universalism is the failure to recognise the place of the particular or the specific (to fail to place or unify the particular within the universal). Abstracted universalism risks glossing real difference. This is precisely what we see at various points in Trotsky's theorising.

One example of Trotsky's abstracted universalism is his analogical comparison of the French and Russian revolutions. Trotsky used the term 'Thermidor' to describe the 'hijacking' of the soviet state by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The term Thermidor refers back to the month in the new French calendar when the Jacobins were overthrown by a reactionary section of the revolutionary movement. Evidently Trotsky learned different lessons about the French revolution than Marx did. For Marx the revolutionary terror and the Thermidorian reaction were a result of the prematurity of the Jacobins - the attempt to make a social (universal) revolution simply by grabbing state (partial) power.

Had he learned the lesson that Marx drew he would have seen more than heroes (Jacobins and Lenin) and villains (Thermidor and Stalin.) In each case reaction was brought about by premature action. Trotsky was never able to trace the decline of Stalinism to Lenin's prematurity. To fail to recognise real difference - to be abstract - is to make principle into rule. The important lesson, here, could be that different conditions require different modes of orientation to principle.

Section V

To see Stalin and Trotsky as extremes - as extreme responses to Lenin's prematurity which failed to integrate the particular (Russian) within the universal (international) revolution is not to imply a spurious moral equality between Stalin and Trotsky. Trotsky's theorising displays a nobility entirely absent in Stalin. It is an understanding of this nobility - the positive side of his abstraction with which I seek to conclude this section of the analysis.

Trotsky's nobility is manifested concretely in his albeit flawed (abstracted), yet unstinting defence of the internationalist character of revolutionary (universal) principle. This had a dual character. On the one hand he provided a trenchant critique of Stalin's abandonment of principle - of Stalin's particularism. On the other he sought (again albeit in a flawed way) to show the proletariats of nations other than the Soviet Union how they could begin to orient to the story of the revolution.

At all times Trotsky treated his task - of telling the story of the revolution - nobly. He was even willing to stand trial at an international commission of inquiry composed of non-Trotskyists to refute the slanders which Stalinists were accusing him of (eg that he was an 'agent of fascism'). 35 In some way this is

reminiscent of Socrates' decision to choose a noble death over a dishonest life. Yet this does not quite capture Trotsky's nobility (nor does the comparison do justice to Socrates) in the sense that Trotsky's desire to tell the story of Lenin is more reminiscent of Plato (Plato's need to tell the story of Socrates' life) than of Socrates. Even as an outcast in permanent exile (he was rejected not just by Stalinist Russia, but also moved from country to country by fearful bourgeois governments) he continued to attempt to articulate the international interests of the proletariat. In short the positive side of his impersonality, referred to above, was his noble capacity to be un-selfish in his desire to orient to principle. It is almost as though he sees his history as his fate - and refuses to allow self to intervene in his destiny. The abstract theorist has to treat him-self as any self ie as no self or impersonally. Therefore being forced to confront history as a conjunction of events and personalities ie of decisive selves is both painful and surprising for the abstract theorist.

Perhaps we can best conceive of Trotsky's understanding of (his and the revolution's history) if we contrast it with that of Lenin. A common gloss in the critical literature on Lenin is that he had a 'voluntaristic' view of history. This means that the basis of Lenin's view of history is that people (actively) create events. In Trotsky the opposite is the case, there is a strong sense in which (almost fatalistically) he sees events and conditions creating and pushing along people. Thus when the

abstract theorist of history comes into contact with personality (evidence of decisive selfhood) the result is paradox and contradiction. We can see this if we consider Trotsky's following views from his 'History of the Russian Revolution' 36

"A failure of correspondence between the subjective and objective is generally speaking, the fountain source of the comic as also the tragic, in both life and art. The sphere of politics less than any other is exempt from the action of this law. People and parties are heroic or comic not in themselves but in their relation to circumstances. When the French revolution entered its decisive stage the most eminent of Girondists became pitiful and ludicrous..... Jean-Marie Rolland, a respected figure as Factory Inspector of Lyons, looks like a living caricature against the background of 1792."

In short personality produces surprise and wonderment - is an impulse to theorising in Trotsky.

It is necessary to recognise that there is a high degree of complementarity between Trotsky and Lenin. While Lenin (subject) is more personal and relaxed in his theorising - seeing no need to describe himself (no desire for example to write an autobiography), Trotsky (object) - always surprised by personality - continually regenerates his sense of impersonality. Lenin's strength is his personal dynamism - his energy, yet the danger of this dynamism is that energy eventually runs out - personality deceases. Trotsky's task is (unlike Stalin who simply seeks to repeat Lenin) to transfrom Lenin's energy. Trotsky's service is to give Lenin his place - to give the

revolution a context by relating its history.

The irony of Trotsky's story is that he never generates an adequate sense of him-self (he sacrifices him-self) in his history. As we have noted this is manifestly the case in his "History of the Revolution". Even more so is it the case in his autobiography. 'My Life' succeeds in being impersonal. It tells very little about what was personal to him. The 'news' of 'My Life' is contained in what it says of his public roles - as literary critic, as pre-revolutionary orator, etc., yet personality is more than the sum of an individual's public roles.

Let me conclude this section by noting a sense in which Trotsky falls short in his noble task of preserving the revolutionary energy of Lenin, of orienting to revolution as principle. I have argued that Trotsky always stopped short of locating the failure of the Russian revolution and the decline into Stalinism in Lenin's prematurity. This can be concretely observed if we consider that his "History of the Russian Revolution" is a heroic tale (Knei-Paz and Howe call it 'epic' in form). That is Trotsky's story of the revolution stops short of an analysis and critique of the emergence of Stalinism. Trotsky's critique of Stalin is left to a separate work as if to underline the fact that he fails to see Stalinism as grounded in Lenin's prematurity. Trotsky, then, gives Lenin a place, a context, but does not do him or the revolution justice.

CHAPTER 6

Section I

There is a curious paradox in the attitude of Western social theory to Mao. On the one hand all agree, Marxists and non-Marxists alike, (see especially the discussion of Kolakowski below) that the Chinese revolution was itself the most significant revolutionary upheaval in recent history. On the other hand the theorist, mentor and guide of this revolution - Mao Tse Tung - is largely ignored. This is not to say that there has been no interest in Mao's work - the works of Bettelheim ¹ in political economy and Schram ² in political theory (two writers selected at random) testify to a degree of interest in Mao's theorising. What is significant is that no revolutionary figure of comparable stature has attracted so little attention from social and political theorists. There is a paucity of rigorous analysis with respect to Mao that allows a recent (1979) group of commentators when surveying the available literature to say that the context in which they wrote was one characterised by.....³

"...a background of plain ignorance (of Mao)."

The question thus raised is whether or not Mao's relative anonymity is deserved? What can we learn from Mao about the revolutionary tradition?

Consideration of the extant literature on Mao reveals that there are two dominant types of perspective. The first kind of view typifies Mao as one who represents a regression within the Marxist tradition, or worse (see especially the analysis below of Kolakowski) that Mao represents an aspect of the terminal decline of that tradition. A second perspective, almost polarly opposed to the first, argues that Mao represents a progression (a genuine development of and re-orientation to Marxist principle) of the Marxist tradition. This second perspective sees Mao as the modern Marxist par excellence.

An exemplar of the first style of perspective is Leszek Kolakowski whose massive three volume work ⁴ attempts an encyclopaedic conspectus of varieties of Marxist philosophy. Kolakowski's discussion of Mao occupies a relatively small section at the very end of his analysis of Marxism - it is appended almost as an afterthought. ⁵ While recognising that the Chinese revolution is....'indisputably one of the most important events of 20th century history', he has this to say of Mao: ⁶

"Measured by European standards the ideological documents of Maoism, and especially the theoretical writings of Mao himself, appear, in fact, extremely primitive and clumsy, sometimes even childish; in comparison even Stalin gives the impression of a powerful theorist."

Anyone who has read Kolakowski's stunning denunciation of Stalin

will understand how negative a judgement this is of Mao. As though he needed to re-emphasise the judgement, Kolakowski adds by way of observation on Mao's philosophical works ('On Practice' and 'On Contradiction' - which we discuss at a later juncture in this chapter)....6

"to put it mildly, much good will is needed to perceive any deep theoretical significance in these texts."

However it is not so important to recognise that this perspective has a low opinion of the intellectual worth of Mao's theorising as to recognise how Mao is evaluated by writers such as Kolakowski in relation to the development of the Marxist tradition. Here Kolakowski argues: 7

"Maoism in its final shape is a radical peasant Utopia in which Marxist phraseology is much in evidence but whose dominant values seem completely alien to Marxism."

What Kolakowski is signalling here is that his seeming reluctance to treat Maoism seriously at all is grounded in his uncertainty about whether Mao's writing really deserves to be understood - except on the most superficial level - the level of speech - as Marxism at all. If we consider his writing on Mao in the context of the argument of his work as a whole, Kolakowski is using Mao as an index of what he sees as the degeneration or death throes of Marxism. Kolakowski's perspective is summarised in the following terse way: 8

"Such is the gist of Mao's philosophy. It is, as may be seen, a naive repetition of a few commonplaces of Leninist-Stalinist Marxism."

This statement is problematic in a number of ways. Firstly, it fails to establish the uniqueness of Mao's theorising. Secondly there are significant ways in which Mao is to be distinguished from Lenin and Stalin as well as Marx. However, this statement serves to review what this perspective intends as an understanding of Mao. Firstly Mao's theorising is to be regarded as secondary rather than essential, and to be fundamentally facile - a mere 'repetition' of the work of others. Secondly, and more importantly, Kolakowski is arguing that Mao's practice cannot be understood in relation to his theorising, ie that Mao has a flawed praxis. This really amounts to a charge of opportunism - Mao is seen as a mere phrasemonger whose unprincipled pragmatism, whose actions, bear only the slightest relationship to his theorising. This is a view which emerges clearly in Kolakowski's evaluation of Mao's attitude to foreign relations. I shall attempt to submit the view that Mao's theorising and his practice are largely unrelated to a sustained critique when I discuss this aspect of his work below.

A prime example of the second type of perspective which regards Mao as the epitome of modern Marxism is the work of Corrigan et al. At this stage of the chapter we will concentrate on one of their two main texts, ie 'For Mao'. In responding to the view that Mao is an insignificant theorist who lacks originality, they

argue that he is 'a far from mediocre philosopher'; indeed they rank Mao with Gramsci as one of the most important modernists.

Instead of viewing Mao's philosophy as simplistic and naive they argue that....9

"...he wrote simply and directly on purpose because theory should be available to a wide audience."

We ought to think seriously about this claim of simplicity and directness in relation to the audience in view of Corrigan et al's main contention that Marx and Mao are deeply unified. If we consider Marx, he did not see the need to be simple and direct all of the time. Nor did he consider that all of his theorising should be ruled by the need to reach 'directly' as wide an audience as possible. It is true that some of Marx's work ('The Communist Manifesto' 10 and 'Wages, Prices and Profits' 11) is simple and direct and is intended for as wide an audience as possible, However this could surely not be said of 'The Grundrisse', nor could it be said of 'Capital'. What Marx recognised was the need not to be abstract about his audience (not to regard his audience as an undifferentiated, homogeneous mass). Marx was engaged with his audience in the sense that he saw that different audiences required more or less complexity, or more or less simplicity. Furthermore, he was unwilling to let considerations of the risk of a small audience rule his theorising. Mao, however, is abstract in relation to his audience, He shows his abstraction by treating every audience as

though it were the same. This abstraction creates a certain linearity, flatness or featurelessness in Mao's theorising; a topic to which we shall return.

In place of the view that Mao is either not a Marxist, or not a significant figure in the tradition, Corrigan et al offer the view that he is 'thoroughly Marxist'. Thus Corrigan et al provide a somewhat eclectic list of ways in which Mao can be considered a Marxist, viz:

1. He has a practical conception of theory.
2. His theorising is historical.
3. His theorising requires a materialist view of philosophy.
4. He recognises the importance of seeing philosophy as a site for the class struggle.

Now, while these proffered points of contact between Mao and Marx may be apposite, they certainly do not allow us to see Mao's uniqueness as a Marxist, and it is the attempt to generate a sense of Mao as an original Marxist thinker which informs the whole of Corrigan et al's perspective. Corrigan et al see a revolution as 'socialist construction', and what they see Marx and Mao sharing 'above all' is a conception of revolutionary theory as 'method'. 12 What is really unique about Mao in this

perspective is that he makes available new methods - new rules-
for the production of a revolution. What Corrigan et al seek,
and what Mao provides, amounts to new rules for the revolution.
'Socialist Construction' for them implies the correct application
of appropriate rules for revolutionary change. We argued in an
earlier chapter that a rule-bound view of revolution as method
risks forgetting its inspiration - that for the sake of which
revolutionary theorising is expressed - and this is a theme to
which we return below.

Section II

The principled account we shall seek to develop will seek to moderate the extremeness of Kolakowski (Mao is an irrelevancy to the Marxist tradition) and Corrigan et al (Mao is the strongest possible version of an orientation to Marx).

With regard to Kolakowski's extremeness we shall recommend that Mao does represent one mode of orientation (albeit converting principle into rule) to the Marxist tradition. Additionally we shall seek to show that a disjunction between theory and practice - opportunism - is not Mao's problem. There is a connectedness between his theory and practice, but his problem is a failure to orient to principle in his theorising.

Turning to Corrigan et al, we will argue that Mao's method (his insistence upon 'correct rules') is a weakness rather than a strength. Furthermore we will develop the view that Mao does not match up to the strongest possible version of Marx (the concept of revolution as universal and engaged orientation to principle).

The basis of Mao's perspective is developed in his essays on philosophy - two of which, 'On Practice' 13 and 'On Contradiction' 14 are generally recognised as being fundamental to his thought. It is likely in my view that the general weakness of the literature on Mao (a weakness remedied by neither

Kolakowski nor Corrigan et al) is largely attributable to a failure to generate a developed understanding of these texts.

In 'On Practice' Mao is really seeking to present an understanding of the relationship of theory to practice, of saying to doing. Here he argues that theory and practice, as extremes, as opposites, belong together. The two poles - theory and practice - are seen as necessarily mutually integrated. Thus there are two great 'errors' - failures to integrate theory and practice. On the one hand 'dogmatism' is 'incorrect' in the sense that it represents the excess of theory expressed in isolation from the moderating influence of practice. At the other pole, 'empiricism' is an error because it represents a 'blind' practice - ie practice which is ignorant of theory, practice which is fragmentary and isolated from theoretical knowledge. Both dogmatism and empiricism suffer from the same error - that of abstraction - for Mao - in the sense that each abstracts or disintegrates the necessary mutuality of theory and practice.

Thus far, however, we have no real insight into Mao's theorising since we have not yet investigated the character of the 'mutuality' or 'integration' between theory and practice. The critical literature on Mao is, in this respect, imprecise and offers little more than a gloss of Mao's praxis. Kolakowski's view, which is particularly disdainful, is that Mao's theorising is disconnected from his practice. At a deep level, Kolakowski

considers there is little connection between the two in Mao's work. Mao's theorising is seen here as opportunistic - an example of ideological posturing which vacillates between extremes, functioning merely to serve as a justification for the whims of the leadership. However Corrigan et al argue that Mao...15

"does not see practice as simply the
'opposite' of theory."

Thus Corrigan et al go on to argue that Mao integrates theory and practice in such a way that one compliments and reinforces the other. Accordingly the only adequate (Maoist) conception of theory is one that allows us 'to engage in practical transformation' and the only adequate practice is that which is informed by 'correct theoretical knowledge'. This version seems simply to repeat Mao's view of the mutuality of theory and practice without attempting to submit Mao's version of that relationship to critical analysis.

How can we advance upon the versions of Mao's praxis offered by Kolakowski and Corrigan et al? The most important aspect of an advance would be to question Mao's view of the reciprocity between, or mutuality of, theory and practice. It is indeed true, as Corrigan et al point out, that Mao sees theory and practice as necessarily integral moments in a unified revolutionary praxis. However we have to ask whether this implies a relationship of equality between theory and practice. The answer to that question must be decisively negative. If

theory's relation to practice is a mutual or self-reinforcing one, then it is a relationship between unequals. For Mao, theorising is unequivocally subordinate to practice. How can we begin to justify this assertion? Firstly, at a concrete level, we can note that of the two great errors referred to in 'On Practice' - ie 'dogmatism' and 'empiricism' - it is dogmatism - the excess of theory (theory abstracted from practice) - which is seen as the greatest danger. 16 This is no accident, nor merely a feature of the vagaries of ideological struggle within the Chinese Communist Party, but an outcome of a fundamental element of Mao's philosophy. In 'On Practice' Mao warmly endorses a view, we noted earlier (Chapter 4), expressed by Lenin that....17

"Practice is higher than theoretical knowledge...for it has the dignity of...immediate actuality."

Thus, for Mao, Marxism 'emphasises the dependence of theory upon practice' and asserts that 'theory is based upon practice', and finally, theory's only function is 'to serve practice'. In this way theory is decisively subordinated to practice such that theory's only role is as 'a guide to action'. We might then ask what is the link between theory and practice such that theory can act as a guide? This question is to be understood in terms of Mao's view of contradiction.

'On Contradiction' is a work of central importance to Mao's philosophy. In this text he develops the themes initiated in 'On

Practice' - primarily the question of the relationship of theory to praxis, and the nature of a revolutionary praxis. Most importantly, from our point of view, this text addresses the question of how Mao conceives of dialectic - his version of revolutionary transformation.

For Mao, contradiction is the essence of the methodicity of dialectics (materialist dialectics) and Marxism. Thus Mao argues.....18

"The law of contradiction in things, that is the law of the unity of opposites, is the basic law of materialist dialectics....Lenin often called this law...the kernel of dialectics."

To understand Marxism as method, for Mao, means understanding dialectic as rule. So what is the methodical character of contradiction such that dialectic-as-rule becomes the mode of resolution - the mode of revolutionary transformation of contradiction? The most important aspect of contradiction, for Mao, is its universality. This universality has two aspects. Contradiction is to be seen as universal with respect to both time and place. Thus contradiction is both ubiquitous and permanent. Let us deal firstly with the conception of the ubiquitous character of contradiction. This is intended to connote that the whole of existence can be summarised in terms of contradiction. There is no process at all which cannot be said to be determined by the 'law' of contradiction. The natural world as well as the social world, objects and organisms , are

all to be seen as ruled by contradiction. Mao asserts...19

"...Contradiction is present in the process of development of all things; it permeates the process of development of each thing from beginning to end. This is...the absoluteness of contradiction."

Contradiction is thus to be understood as a 'law of motion' of the universe. Dialectic, then, becomes a set of 'correct' rules for both interpreting and transforming the world. Turning to the second aspect of contradiction's universality - its permanence - Mao argues that contradictions rule the whole of human history and the whole of man's future. This contention is directly related to Mao's view that the revolution has to be 'permanent' (since contradictions are permanent) - a view which we subject to critique below.

Since contradiction is universal ('absolutely universal'), dialectical intervention has to show its awareness of the 'all-sided' character of the reality it seeks to transform. An example of this 'all-sidedness' would be, say, understanding the bourgeoisie. The position of the bourgeoisie in any capitalist society could not, for Mao, be understood out of the context of the position of the proletariat. Each pole or extreme is the condition of the other's existence, and transformation (resolution) of the contradiction between the two implies whole recognition of the mutuality of that relationship. Failure to be 'all-sided' results in an 'incorrect' praxis. Thus Mao claims....20

"Know the enemy, and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat".

and furthermore...21

"Listen to both sides and you will be enlightened, heed only one side and you will be benighted."

As Corrigan et al have pointed out Mao's stress upon absolute universalism is the basis of his critique of Stalinsim. When Mao argues that 'Stalinism walks on one leg', 22 he is arguing against Stalin's limitation of revolution to the economic and industrial sphere. Mao on the other hand argues that the revolution has to invade all spheres - the political and cultural rather than simply the economic. The Chinese Revolution, it appears, walks on both legs.

We ought to be careful of making too simple extrapolations from Mao's argument about the universality of contradiction (a mistake which Corrigan et al perpetrate). Firstly it is important to recognise that while Mao criticised the 'partial' nature of Stalin's revolution, Stalin and Mao are unified in certain significant ways (see below, especially the discussion of a shared nihilism towards means). Secondly, we shall see in the discussion below concerning the relation of Mao's theorising to that of Marx, that Mao's rule-bound 'absolute' conception of universalism (revolution is everything) is to be distinguished from Marx's principled concept of universalism (the revolution

has a place).

We should now ask how does Mao conceive of revolutionary transformation - what is the movement of dialectic for Mao? It is instructive to consider in this context the following well-known aphorism from his 'Little Red Book'.....23

"We should support whatever the enemy opposes
and oppose whatever the enemy supports."

Kolakowski cryptically asserts that this is a sentence that 'no European Marxist would have written'. The point should be to attempt to understand what this tells us of Mao's theorising and to generate a sense of his uniqueness, rather than merely stipulating this - as Kolakowski seems content to do. What Mao conceives of as dialectic is a movement of contradiction or opposition. The rule of dialectic is confrontation - meeting an enemy head-on. Dialectic for Mao requires self to generate its strength in direct opposition to other. The attraction of confrontation for Mao is its here and now immediacy - its concreteness is his remedy for the abstraction of the 'two great errors' of dogmatism and empiricism.

In order to deepen our understanding of Mao's conception of dialectic as confrontation/opposition of self to other, we must examine a refinement he makes to his theory of contradiction. Since the whole world is dominated by a multiplicity of contradictions it is important to be able to distinguish priority amongst contradictions, given a concern for strategy - correct

rules. Thus Mao attempts to develop a distinction between 'principal' and 'secondary' contradiction as a rule of dialectical intervention. The principal contradiction is the dominant contradiction in any process - that which influences and shapes the nature of all other ('secondary') contradictions. For example the 'principal' contradiction in a capitalist society is that between capital and labour. All other contradictions within capitalism, eg the contradiction between petty bourgeois and bourgeoisie, are secondary to the principal contradiction. The important point to grasp about this distinction is that it clearly demonstrates the character of Mao's methodic conception of revolution - revolution as orientation to rule.

It is Mao's commitment to (principal) contradiction as rule which enables us to interpret his version of China's relationship (self) to the foreigner (other). In Mao's conception of foreign policy there are two great enemies. On the one hand there exists the contradiction of China with the imperialism of the capitalist United States, and on the other the 'expansionism' and 'hegemony' of the revisionist Soviet Union.

Mao's view is that China's (self's) principal contradiction is with the 'revisionist' Soviet Union. Therefore the commitment to orient to contradiction as rule obliges China to 'support whatever the enemy (Soviet Union) opposes, and oppose whatever the enemy (Soviet Union) supports'.

If we understand contradiction as orientation to rule, we illuminate what is a lacuna for Maoists and non-Maoists alike - the seemingly impenetrable nature of Mao's conception of 'correct' foreign policy. Even the most dedicated Maoists who fully support Mao's domestic policy (or China's 'alternative path to Socialist Construction') find his attitude to international relations difficult to accept. While a few have had the courage to criticise this aspect of Maoism, the standard version of this among Western Maoists is to regard it as an aberration which is related to the border disputes between China and Russia. Corrigan et al have strangely very little to say about Mao's conception of foreign policy. Kolakowski regards Mao's foreign policy as final confirmation of the disjunction between Mao's conception of theory and practice, as is indicated in the following citation where he describes the course of action in Mao's foreign policy as....²⁴

"...a straightforward political one and not a matter of Maoist ideology; as far as Marxist language is still used in prosecuting this policy, it is decorative rather than essential."

In short, Kolakowski considers Mao's foreign policy as opportunistic and deeply unrelated to his theorising. For us, neither the view of foreign policy as aberration (Western Maoist view) nor as opportunism (Kolakowski) are appropriate. Mao's foreign policy is deeply embedded in his theorising. What we ought to consider is the relationship of Mao's linear, mechanical and rule-bound concept of the character of revolution to Marx's

principled and engaged universalism.

We have noted that Mao's conception of the rule of (principal) contradiction obliges China to ally itself with reactionary and autocratic regimes with the aim of defeating the number one enemy of revisionism and eventually establishing world socialism. (Examples of the distortions introduced by orienting to the rule of principal contradiction are Maoist opposition to revolutionary forces in Angola, Zaire, Oman, Chile, and support for (from 1970) autocrats such as the Shah of Iran.)

How consistent is this view with the principled account of Marx? Firstly we ought to note that Mao's willingness to 'kiss the devil' establishes a congruence with Stalin's nihilism towards the means of producing socialism. Corrigan et al's unwillingness to acknowledge what is manifestly evident in Mao's writing (an expressed - though not completely uncritical - admiration for Stalin) can now begin to be seen as a failure to engage with Mao's theorising at a deep level. Secondly the principled account of Marx recognises that an alliance with reactionary forces is likely to stifle the development of the 'progressive' forces which are necessary for the creation of socialist or universal man. This was at the root of Marx's critique of the Lassalean socialists in Germany. 25 In this instance Marx argued against Lassalle's view that socialism could be established in Germany by socialists aligning themselves with the Prussian autocracy to defeat the 'bourgeois-liberals'. Both

Lassalle and Mao fail to match up to the principled version in two ways. Firstly, since allies must always influence each other, socialism is likely to be adversely affected by its harnessing of reaction. Secondly and more importantly the destruction of progressive movements with the aid of reactionary forces can only prematurely obliterate the potential necessary (the 'negative universalism' of capitalism, for example, which we discussed in chapters 1 and 2) for the transformation to the 'positive universalism' of socialism.

At this juncture it is appropriate to anticipate an objection that might be raised concerning my perspective upon Mao. Some Western Marxists might simply seek to amend Mao's version of foreign policy by arguing that if Mao saw the contradiction with capitalist (United States) imperialism as the principal contradiction, then his perspective would be acceptable. This is not what I am arguing. The proposed amendment simply changes the rule, or re-orientates to the rule. My objection is to any version of revolution as orientation to rule rather than to principle. Changing the rule, or re-orientating to rule is no genuine change - no real form of self-education.

In seeking to demonstrate that Mao presents a version of revolution as orientation to rule we must be conscious that Mao was not unaware of the problem of conceiving of revolution in terms of rule. It has frequently been pointed out (for example by Schram and Corrigan et al) that Mao was acutely sensitive to

the problem of the growth of bureaucracy, and of a 'privileged' class of 'capitalist roaders' within the Chinese Communist Party. Stabilisation of the revolution seemed to Mao to produce not consolidation but degeneration - a move away from socialist principle. However the question then arises of how we are to evaluate his responses to the problem of rule (in disjunction from principle).

Mao argues in 'The Important Thing is to be Good at Learning' 26 that the emphasis upon 'social practice' in his philosophy means that, to make a successful revolution, we must be prepared to risk making mistakes, and to learn from and correct our errors. Now, it would appear that Mao does display what he recommends. In order to correct the error of 'capitalist roading' he was willing to take the very pronounced risk of unleashing the 'Cultural Revolution'. Likewise, he was willing to alter course with respect to the early attempt to copy Stalinist industrialisation.

How are we to interpret these recognitions of the problem of rule becoming detached from principle - these attempts to 'correct errors'? The views of Corrigan et al and Kolakowski seem not to advance our understanding too far. For Kolakowski, these changes are simply to be understood as vacillations which reflect the desire of a leadership to maintain its power. For Corrigan et al, the 'correction of errors' is to be understood as good experimental practice - the necessary methodicity of a scientific

socialist seeking an alternative (to the Soviet model) path of 'socialist construction'. We can develop our view if we compare Mao's solutions, or 'corrections', to Marx's principled perspective.

One of the fundamental problems of Maoism concerns the advocacy of permanent revolution. Since contradictions are seen as universal with respect to history, ie as eternal, then revolution has to be continually re-achieved. Mao argues that classes and class conflict as social contradictions do not disappear with the advent of socialism. The solution to this problem (the problem of the growth of a privileged class of bureaucrats and specialists) is to be found in a cultural revolution. However one cultural revolution would not suffice - since contradictions are eternal, the socialist revolution will have to be periodically re-run. Thus Mao asserts that....²⁶

"Two or three cultural revolutions should be carried out every hundred years."

This amounts to an absolute conception of the universal/permanent nature of socialist revolution. The revolution is seen as everything, rather than as having a place in relation to other processes. Furthermore we might begin to question whether Mao has a developed and principled vision of socialism. The linearity, or featurelessness, of Mao's theorising reduces socialism to contradiction. Socialism loses its uniqueness - its special character - in relation to the development of universal

man, and becomes seen as just another stage in the endless evolution of contradiction. This failure to see the (unique) place of communism and socialism is betrayed in the following passage....27

"Capitalism leads to socialism, socialism leads to communism and communist society...will also have a beginning and an end. There is nothing in the world that does not arise, develop and disappear. Monkeys turned into men, mankind arose; in the end the whole human race will disappear; it may turn into something else; the earth itself will also cease to exist."

So how does Mao's perspective with respect to permanent revolution relate to the principled account of Marx? Firstly, class conflict is not eternal for Marx. Communist society is literally class-less (for Marx) (this does not mean that all human conflict ends with communism, simply that conflicts no longer have a class character). Secondly, communism is not just another stage of historical development in the principled account. As we argued in chapters one and two, genuine communism is the first form of society of create the universal, conscious and freely-associating individual. For Marx, the history of mankind properly begins only with communism in the sense that this is the first society in which man can collectively control his destiny. Someone (Mao) who wants to make a revolution after the revolution has been achieved either has not produced a genuinely communist revolution in the first place, or cannot see the place of revolution. Consolidating a genuine (universal) revolution is not to be confused with stagnation.

Section III

We can, perhaps, best understand the relationship of Mao's rule-bound concept of revolution to the principled understanding of Marx if we consider the way in which Mao is seen as unique as a revolutionary innovator. In 'Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory' 28, Corrigan et al put forward the view that Mao is unique in the sense that he provided new rules for the construction of socialism. Mao's main innovation is to replace the peasantry for the proletariat as the motive force of revolutionary transformation. Thus Corrigan et al criticise the 'economism' of Lenin and Stalin. They argue that transforming the economic base (supposedly the Lenin/Stalin or 'Bolshevik' method) is not as appropriate as Mao's method which concentrates upon transforming the social relationships between producers. In short Maoists see socialism as the extension of the social relationships of the peasant commune (the 'mir' or 'obshchina') to the level of society as a whole. The primitive communism of the peasant commune is to be seen as the basis for future 'socialist construction'. Corrigan et al's Maoist perspective is intended especially as a critique of Lenin. However I wish to consider this perspective in relation not just to Lenin but also to Marx.

There are two important issues which are not addressed in the 'revolution as orientation to ('new') rule', offered by Corrigan

et al. Firstly, Mao's perspective is not entirely original or unique, and secondly it is clearly at variance with Marx's principled conception of revolution.

Let us firstly consider the originality of Mao's substitution of peasantry for proletariat and advocacy of the peasant commune as the method of 'socialist construction'. The notion that communism can be based upon the social relationships of the peasant commune is a view which was advocated by many theorists whom Marx described as 'primitive communists' - most notably the Russian 'Populists' whose views were subjected to critique by both Lenin 29 and Marx 30. For Lenin, the peasant communism of the Populists was literally reactionary in the sense that it advocated a regression - turning the clock back - whereas socialism is necessarily progressive.

If we now turn to the second issue - the relation of Mao's peasant communism to Marx's principled concept of revolution - we can see that there are several ways in which Mao is at variance with Marx. The contrast between the two approaches is brought clearly into focus if we consider the strongest argument developed in the 'peasant communism' alternative. For Corrigan et al (as with the Russian Populists) the social relationships of the peasant commune are a good model of socialism in the sense that this form provides a concept of the 'total', 'complete' or 'universal' man required in any socialist vision. This is especially the case because the peasantry has not suffered the

fragmentation and alienation brought about by the division of labour within capitalism.

The view developed above is in flat contradiction to Marx. As we argued at length in chapters one and two, the alienation of the division of labour within capitalism is not seen as being entirely negative. The alienation of relations of production within capitalism contains within itself a tendency towards universalism (albiet a deformed universalism) ie alienation provides the conditions for its own dialectical transformation. There is all the difference in the world between primitive communism (which is localised in its nature) and Marx's universal concept of communism (which is necessarily international and 'advanced', ie advanced in terms of man's capacity to control his history, in its nature). If we fail to consider that there is a cost to be paid in trying to 'leap' from primitive to genuine communism we commit a serious error. What is weak about primitive communism, for Marx, is its prematurity - the notion that one can transform something without first having produced what it is we are seeking to transform. Thus how can primitive communism (Mao) seek to transform private property, or the division of labour, when these forms themselves have not first been created - when these stages themselves have not been reached?

CHAPTER 7

Section I

We do not have to probe too deeply to identify negative views of modernist versions of revolution. Indeed there appears to be a strong, perhaps dominant, current of thought amongst both Marxists and non-Marxists alike that perceives modernism as a degeneration of the Marxist tradition. Thus, amongst non-Marxists, Kolakowski entitles the third volume 1 of his history of Marxist thought, which considers the post-Stalin era, 'The Breakdown of Marxism'. In this volume Kolakowski describes modern Marxism as 'fantasy' and as revealing itself (almost as though it had stepped out of Samuel Beckett's play, 'Waiting for Godot') as 2 'the farcical aspect of human bondage'.

Amongst Marxists, likewise, there is a great deal of antipathy to dominant forms of modernism, especially to the Western European exemplars of contemporary Marxism. The most articulate pro-Marxist critic of modernism is Perry Anderson 3. In his analysis Anderson argues that the dominant imagery (or 'fundamental emblem') of post-Stalin Western Marxist thought has been that of pessimism 4. Anderson traces the roots of this pessimism to reactions to both the distortion of the Marxist tradition by Stalinism and the failure of Western Marxism to achieve a socialist transformation of any advanced capitalist society. This pessimism, even despair, is accompanied by what

for him are distortions of the Marxist tradition, viz:

1. A lack of articulation between theory and practice. The notion that there is no developed praxis in much of modernism. This particular barb is clearly aimed at critical theory and the same charge has been repeated by numerous other critics of this perspective. See for example Jay 5 and Bottomore 6. We might begin to see how shallow a conception of practice is implicit in some of this criticism when we note that Bottomore considers that a theory can only be said to have a satisfactory praxis if its practitioners are active members of a political party.
2. The concentration of Marxist theorists into 'professional philosophy' which resulted in a turning away from an analysis of the economic and a facing toward culture, which is, for Anderson, a reversal of the proper priorities of Marxist theory.
3. Finally, for Anderson and for many other conventional Marxist critics of modernism, this pessimism generates a form of introversion, an impotence and inability of effect any serious transformation of the advanced capitalist

transformation of the advanced capitalist societies.

How are we to understand the kind of critique presented by Anderson? We might begin by noting that it accounts for an 'excessive' or 'extreme' aspect of modernism. Modern Marxism, at its worst, can display a narrow introversion, and can appear as alternately quiescent and nihilistically directionless. However, ought we not to look for the good in modernism, see what it offers at its best as well as at its worst? Furthermore we ought to go further than Anderson and Bottomore in attempting to account for the grounds of the pessimism displayed by modernists.

Firstly we should recognise more candidly than Anderson does that what he sees as the origin of this pessimism is indeed two very real failures of Marxism. Thus Stalinism does represent a degeneration of the Marxist tradition, and the inability to produce a socialist revolution in an advanced capitalist society is too a failure. Modernists are correct to seek to call the tradition to account in striving for an understanding of these failures. There is therefore a second extreme which Anderson fails to consider, that of ignoring or glossing (as with apologists for Stalin) the failures of the tradition. Neither seeking to ignore failure (apologetics) nor a numbed introversion (the excess of modernism) are appropriate responses to failure. However, what modernism does show an awareness of is the need to take responsibility for what has been done (Stalinism) and what

has not been achieved (a socialist revolution in an advanced society). Modernism sees the need for Marxism to suffer what are the consequences of its actions. If we fear to suffer (Anderson) what we have done, or what has been done in the name of our tradition, then we fail to educate ourselves, and feel the force of our actions. Avoiding the necessary suffering implicated in failure is to produce an irresponsible practice, rather than what Marxism requires - a responsible practice. If we are willing to be patient, to suffer, then we can see that pessimism is only one possibility in modernism. Instead of the negativity of pessimism, it is my argument that there is latent within some forms of modernism a positive and liberating theorising.

In my investigation of modernism I shall contradict flatly some of the main elements of the critique presented by writers such as Bottomore and Anderson. Thus I see the analysis of culture as a necessity rather than a luxury. Viewing production as a wider process than the narrowly economic likewise is to be viewed as progressive. Finally, the rediscovery of basic philosophical questions in Marx is to be regarded as a strength rather than a weakness in modernism.

In the following discussion I look at two exemplars of modernism (Gramsci, and socialist feminism) which preserve the conception of Marxism as a moral enterprise - Marxism as a universal and engaged mode of orientation to principle.

Section II

What is immediately impressive about Gramsci is the extent to which even the sternest critics of Marxism are willing to acknowledge that his theorising is fresh, unencumbered by dogma and unique in its approach. An example of this response to Gramsci is Kolakowski, who as we have seen does not have a high regard for modernist Marxism in general. However of Gramsci he has the following to say....7

"(Gramsci) is probably the most original political writer among the post-Lenin generation of Communists."

Likewise the French Marxist, Louis Althusser, who writes from a different viewpoint to Gramsci within the Marxist tradition, states.....8

"Who has really tried to follow up the explorations of Marx and Engels? I can only think of Gramsci."

The originality of Gramsci from our point of view is attributable to his attempt to suffer the failures of Marxism - to ask the really difficult questions, and further to learn from the suffering of failure, in a way which shows how revolutionary theorising can re-orient to principle in a universal way. Gramsci is one of the few theorists who is willing to engage seriously, firstly with the failure to transform capitalism in the advanced societies, and secondly with the bureaucratic degeneration of Soviet communism.

We argued in Chapters 1 and 2 that a distinguishing feature of the principled account of Marx's concept of revolution is the primacy of an investigation of the nature of man, and the place of revolution in relation to the development of man's essence. What I wish to demonstrate about Gramsci's theorising is not so much that an investigation of the essence of what it is to be man is at the centre of Gramsci's philosophy (though recognition of this is important since it is most frequently either ignored, eg by Althusser, or glossed over, as in the pieces on Gramsci by Kolakowski already referred to, and Joll 9 and Anderson 10), as that he develops this question, ie that he does not simply repeat Marx here. What is original about Gramsci is that he allows us to see ways in which it is possible, within the modern period, to re-orient to principle in a universal and engaged fashion.

We can begin to understand the centrality of questions on the nature of man to Gramsci's thought if we consider the following typification of Marxism offered by Gramsci.....11

"This philosophy (Marxism) always regards as the major factor in history not crude economic facts but man, men in society, men who interact with each other, who develop through these contacts...a collective social will."

Furthermore if we consider Gramsci's 'Prison Notebooks' which is the essential part of his work, we can note that a whole section is devoted to and entitled 'What is Man?'. In this important

(though much ignored by conventional critics of Gramsci) section, Gramsci says of the question 'What is Man?'.....12

"This is the primary and principal question that philosophy asks."

In this sense Marxism, or 'the philosophy of praxis' shares something with all other forms of philosophy. What is distinctive about Marxist philosophy is its mode of response to this question. Hence.....13

"Reflecting on it, we can see that in putting the question 'what is man?' what we mean is: what can man become?. That is, can man dominate his own destiny, can he 'make himself', can he create his own life?. We maintain therefore that man is a process, and, more exactly, the process of his actions. If you think about it, the question itself 'what is man?' is not an abstract question. It is born of our reflection about ourselves and about others, and we want to know, in relation to what we have thought and seen, what we are and what we can become; whether we really are, and if so to what extent, 'makers of our own selves', of our life and of our destiny."

Gramsci's perspective upon Marxism indicates a view of man as an active producer, with the history of man seen as the story of the development of man's essence in the world. The production of conscious, active and universal, freely-associating individuals is the aim of the 'philosophy of praxis'.

We ought to stress the importance of universalism to Gramsci's philosophy and view of man. The production of a universal and all-round individual can only be achieved by a philosophy which is universal and revolutionary in its outlook. Accordingly it is

not accidental that Gramsci often referred to his journalism (Gramsci was a founding editor of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) newspaper 'L'Unita, and had earlier been a leading writer in the socialist newspapers 'Avanti' and 'L'Ordine Nuovo') as an 'integrated' journalism. Revolutionary writing, according to Gramsci, had to touch every sphere of existence. Likewise Marxism, as a dialectical philosophy, had to seek to present an all-round understanding of the development of man. This is discussed at length in his major theoretical work, the 'Prison Notebooks', where Gramsci argues that....14

"The true fundamental function and significance of the dialectic can only be grasped if the philosophy of praxis is conceived as an integral and original philosophy which opens up a new stage of history, and a new phase in the development of world thought."

The 'integral' character of Marxist philosophy is reflected in the fact that it can only be a world-based philosophy. Any attempt to produce a Marxism which falls short of an all-round view of man is a perversion of the character of the Marxian vision, and to be condemned as one-sided. An example of this form of distortion would be to view the concept of 'man as a producer' in uniquely economic terms, which would turn production into a one-sided, rather than universal, concept. Thus Gramsci argues that.....15

"It may be said that the economic factor (understood in the immediate, Judaic sense of historical economism) is only one of several ways in which the basic historical process

manifests itself."

Even though Gramsci does argue that the economic factor is only one of several ways in which the basic historical process manifests itself, he is not attempting to displace a naive economic determinism with an equally naive pluralist view of social forces. We can grasp this if we understand how he views the relationship between base (economy) and superstructure (of which the ideological, political and cultural form a part). It makes no sense to Gramsci to talk of a relationship of determination (which seems to him 'mechanical') between base and superstructure. The two parts each influence the other and are constitutive of an integrated totality, ie their relationship is one of dialectic rather than determination. Gramsci referred to base and superstructure forming a 'historical bloc'. This does not, however, negate priority, since the basic, or initial, or defining, feature of man is his productive practice, his work on nature. Nevertheless this basic activity is inconceivable except within a social context which constitutes that practice. This seems to me to be thoroughly grounded in Marx, viewed in terms of orientation to principle. Gramsci is orienting to Marx's dictum that....16

"It is not man's consciousness which determines his being, but on the contrary his social being which determines his consciousness."

Productive practice is decisive, but only where this is viewed as other-oriented, ie social and conscious.

It is important to note that Gramsci's universalism is not an abstract concept (remember that [citation 13] 'the question "What is Man?" is not an abstract question'). Gramsci's universalism is an engaged rather than an abstract conception of man. Indeed the originality of Gramsci is attributable to the extent that his vision of universal development was engaged with the conditions, ie the potential and resistances of modern capitalism.

Gramsci more than any other contemporary Marxist understood the force of recognising that the universalising and rationalising potential of capitalism was not exhausted. This is one of the dominant themes of 'The Prison Notebooks' where Gramsci argues that capitalism as a 'social formation' is unlikely to disappear as long as the universalising forces within it find the power for further forward movement. There are two consequences of this insight. Firstly, the final victory of socialism will require a victory in an 'advanced' capitalist society. Because the universalising momentum in advanced capitalism is still a vital force, and equally because the culture and consciousness of the proletariats of these societies are insufficiently developed in relation to that force, the socialist transformation is likely to involve what will be literally a 'long revolution'. Secondly, since Gramsci's view of universalism is an engaged rather than an abstract view of man, universal modes of production relationships will not appear ex nihilo, but, as in Marx's vision, 'out of the womb of capitalism'. Here Gramsci asserts that....¹⁷

"The socialist state already exists potentially in the institutions of social life characteristic of the exploited labouring class'.

We might ask a number of questions of Gramsci's engaged concept of universalism. Firstly, we might ask what are the embryonic forms within modern capitalism which can be transformed into the 'positive' universalism of socialism - where is the potential which offers the possibility of a dialectical change? For Gramsci, one answer to this question is to be found in the development of workers' councils. We can perhaps best understand the positive universalising potential of the workers' councils if we compare Gramsci's view of them in relation to the trade union as an institution. To begin with, the concept of a workers' council is more comprehensive than that of the trade union. Within an enterprise, the trade union can be a sectional force in the sense that it tends to represent some, eg especially skilled workers), but not all employees. The workers' council organises all of the workers within any given factory, irrespective of level, skill, creed, political affiliation, etc. However the most important sense in which the workers' council represents an advance towards universalism is with regard to its function. The trade union as an institution, according to Gramsci, is one-sided in the sense that it can only (at best) modify or reform capitalism. In that sense the trade union is a bargaining institution which is self-limiting in its relation to the control of production. Typically the trade union will seek to improve wages and conditions for some of the workforce, but will cede the strategic (ie the really important) decisions to capital or, more

precisely, the representatives of capital. (This is not to say that the trade union is a useless form from a revolutionary's standpoint. Thus even limited bargaining can underscore contradictions between labour and capital.) The function of the factory council represents more the potential for a complete ie qualitative rather than quantitative turn in the nature of work, ie represents genuine revolutionary potential. In concept, the workers' council represents not the limited economistic aspirations of the trade union but the comprehensive control of all spheres of production by the whole of a work force. Clearly, the councils represented a stage in the revolutionary process, ie they were transitional forms, and their internal structures would have to be extended beyond the limits of individual workplaces. However the universalising potential which they represented is fundamental to Gramsci's thought.

We can further our understanding of Gramsci's principled view of revolution - his universal and engaged view, if we consider this in relation to a version of revolution which falls short of the principled view and offers a rule-bound alternative. In this context Gramsci's polemical interchanges with Bordiga (who was a rival leader of an 'ultra-left' wing within the PCI) is instructive. Bordiga was notoriously anti-theoretical, and fundamentally disagreed with Gramsci's view that the development of the culture and consciousness of the proletariat is a decisive force in the revolutionary struggle. Thus Bordiga claimed.....18

"The necessity of study is something proclaimed by a congress of schoolteachers and not of socialists."

For Bordiga, grabbing state-power via the agency of a strictly disciplined revolutionary vanguard was what mattered. In this version there is no difference between a coup d'etat and a revolution. As we have argued before, this is a one-sided view of revolution, in the sense that it fails to integrate the political with the social and economic dimensions of revolutionary struggle. However, this one-sidedness is brought out more starkly if we compare Bordiga with Gramsci in terms of their view of fascism. For Bordiga (~~the~~), there was no real difference between the Fascists of Mussolini and the bourgeois parliamentarians such as the Socialist Party of Serrati. Gramsci, seeing that Fascism was not just a threat to 'bourgeois-democratic' institutions, but also to the proletarian movement as a whole, argued that a policy of 'broad alliances' with progressives, eg the Socialist Party etc., was necessary. Bordiga's failure is the failure (see Chapter 4, especially the discussion of Lenin's 'Left-Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder') to distinguish compromises on principle from tactical compromises, ie rejection of compromise in toto, or confusion of principle and rule. Bordiga's one-sided abstraction prevents him from seeing any place for compromise (ie alliance with non-communist 'progressives'). Bordiga's maximalism - 'all or nothing' - displays the kind of impetuous disregard for the state of development of proletarian

consciousness in relation to the forces opposing it, characteristic of the rebel who has not learned the virtue of patience, necessary for the transition from the sheer rebel to the revolutionary. Unsurprisingly, although the Comintern backed Gramsci's policy on fascism in the early twenties, by the time Stalin had consolidated his rule, the policy of 'popular fronts' against Fascism in Europe was abandoned and the socialists/social democrats were labelled a la Bordiga "Social Fascists".

Gramsci's antipathy to a one-sided and abstract concept of revolution and his advocacy, in its place, of a universal and engaged concept of revolution is reflected in his view of the role of the intellectual in encouraging the growth of proletarian culture and consciousness. He always opposed the notion of an intellectual elite which was segregated from the mass of the population. The term 'organic intellectual' connotes Gramsci's view that the intellectuals had to become active and engaged with the proletariat. Any disengaged concept of the revolutionary intellectual would produce a 'vanguard with no army to support it'. In Gramsci's view the intellectual must be intimately and dialectically interconnected with the masses; his role is that of generating the momentum for a movement forward in the consciousness of the proletariat. This process he designates as a catharsis. Hence....19

"The term catharsis can be employed to indicate the passage from the purely economic to the ethico-political moment. This also means the passage from 'objective to

subjective' and from 'necessity to freedom'. Structure ceases to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to itself, and makes him passive; and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political from, and a source of new initiatives."

Thus the engaged, or 'organic' intellectual functions to inspire the consciousness and active confidence of the proletariat, thereby creating the opportunity for transforming the objective world (what appears like ineluctable fate) into the subject of conscious control, ie the intellectual makes available to the masses awareness of the contingency of the objective world - that it could be other than it is.

As we have argued the 'organic' intellectuals, engaged with the proletariat, serve the function of aiding the development of a revolutionary culture within that class. The concept, for which Gramsci is perhaps best known, of hegemony refers to the process by which a class develops and asserts its moral and intellectual, ie cultural, leadership in advance of actually assuming political power. Any group which fails to establish this form of cultural hegemony before taking political power (eg the insurrectionist) is liable to be unable to sustain a genuinely revolutionary impetus. In short the cultural, political and economic forms of socialist society have to be prefigured within the constricting limits of capitalism. However we might ask what is distinctive about the hegemony of the proletariat, since the concept of hegemony relates to the process by which all ruling classes within history have aspired to and maintained their dominance.

From the point of view of this discussion (which is in no way intended as a comprehensive discursive account of the topic of hegemony) what is fundamental and unique to the proletarian form of hegemony is its universalism. Proletarian hegemony will have to transform and extend the already international character of capitalist hegemony into a world-wide system of cultural leadership. Thus he argued that....20

"....hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations."

Yet further, proletarian culture would be universal to the extent that it would open up broader areas of human existence to the potential of human control - areas which were considered to be mechanically determined (independent of human intervention) would be transformed and seen for what they are - processes which offer the possibility of 'organic' or dialectical intervention. Gramsci's discussion of catharsis and hegemony has much in common with the aporia evident in Marx's writing (especially in 'The Grundrisse' and in 'Capital') where appearance - the seemingly law-like, mechanically caused structure of the capitalist social and economic system is subverted and seen for what it is - the product of human interaction, offering up the possibility of its own transformation by man. (This seems to me to be the real

sense in which 'catharsis' marks the movement from the 'purely economic' to the ethico-political moment.

It is evident from the 'Prison Notebooks' that, by that period in the development of his thought, Gramsci considered the socialist revolution would be a 'long revolution'. That is, the creation of a proletarian culture which could exercise moral and intellectual leadership prior to the period of revolutionary crisis was something which would require long and painstaking effort on the part of revolutionaries. Accordingly he developed a view of historical development which argues that revolution is not a smoothly continuous (nor permanent, in Trotsky's sense) process but one marked by a distinction between 'passive' and 'active' phases. It is important to consider these phases as an integrated totality - they cannot be seen in isolation (this is significant in assessing the relationship of Gramsci to Eurocommunism - see below). Gramsci explains the relationship between 'active' and 'passive' phases of revolution in terms of a military analogy. Hence he argues that....²¹

"The war of movement becomes increasingly a war of position and one can say that a state wins a war according to how far it prepares it minutely....in the time of peace."

What he is saying is that the force required (the hegemony established) for the turn, for the 'active' phase of revolution has to be generated within a 'passive' phase or war of position. The establishment of hegemony in the passive phase has to be

thoroughgoing - has to affect every sphere is the proletariat's existence if the turn is too be achieved, ie it is is to be a genuine revolution - a turn of the whole man in his nature or essence.

We ought now to consider how Gramsci views the Party in relation to the development of the revolutionary struggle. The following extract should serve to focus our thoughts....22

"We have maintained:

1. that the rrevolution is not necessarily proletarian and communist simply because it proposes and achieves the overthrow of the bourgeois state;
2. nor is it proletarian and communist simply because it proposes and achieves the destruction of the representative institutions and administrative machinery through which central government exercises the political power of the bourgeoisie.
3. it is not proletarian and communist even if the wave of popular insurrection places power in the hands of men who call themselves communists, The revolution is proletarian and communist only to the extent that is a liberation of the proletarian and communist forces that were developing within the very heart of the society dominated by the capitalist class."

This indicates how clearly Gramsci rejects a partial (purely political) concept of revolution. Gramsci well understands that grabbing state power from the grasp of the bourgeoisie (a coup d'etat) is to be distinguished from a revolutionary transformation which is necessarily universal in its scope. A genuinely revolutionary Communist Party seeks to guide the

liberation of social and economic forms already developing amongst the proletariat - universalising the consciousness of the proletariat, training for future socialist forms of power by participation in the workers' councils, etc. Any attempt to seize political power before the social forces have developed sufficient momentum to carry through a universal transformation is premature and tantamount to opportunism. Like Marx, but unlike Bordiga, Gramsci was cautious of the dangers of Jacobinism.

If the party itself is to have an engaged relationship with the proletariat, then the party itself needs the spontaneity and dynamic provided by the proletarian mass moving towards a universal consciousness. Likewise the party seeks to guide and channel this force in a direction which will amplify its effect in transforming capitalistic social relations. Thus the party is not conceived of as autonomous from the proletariat. Neither is the party thought to mechanically dispense 'correct' ideas to a subordinate and externalised proletariat. Party and proletariat are conceived as having an 'organic' relationship. Each is dialectically interconnected to the other. Proletarian force and spontaneity is ineffective (can burn itself out) unless it harnesses itself with a guiding and organising influence which can preserve rather than repress the origin of that inspiration. Similarly the structure provided by the party will cease to be enabling and liberatory, instead ossifying and repressive, should it fail to engage with the driving force of proletarian

spontaneity.

Gramsci was remarkably prescient about the dangers of the failure of a party to maintain an 'organic', ie vital and engaged, intimate relationship to the proletariat. Should (communist) rule become detached from principle (should rule be confused with, or mistaken for, principle) the result would be a bureaucratic deformation of the party and an ossification of the revolutionary potential of the proletariat. Consider the following warning....23

"Woe betide us if, through a sectarian conception of the Party's function in the revolution, we should try to turn it into a material hierarchy, to fix in mechanical forms of immediate power the governing apparatus of the moving masses, to constrict the revolutionary process into Party forms. If that happens we may succeed in diverting part of mankind from its course and in 'dominating' history, but the true revolutionary process will escape from the control and influence of the Party, which will unconsciously become an organ of conservatism."

Bureaucracy - conceiving of revolution as orientation to rule (the 'correct' rules) in ignoring principle treats the proletariat's initiative and force as a threat. The rule-bound conception of party sees only two (unprincipled) alternative modes of orientation to (its) rule - either conformity or deviation, either predictability or chaos. In this view mass initiative appears unpredictable and threatening. What should be seen as an opportunity is seen as a threat, with the only possible solution being seen as that of repression and resolute

(but unprincipled) enforcement of rule. In the alternative or principled account of Gramsci, the party, as guide, requires to be engaged with the masses in the sense of being attuned to the all-round development of the proletariat. While there might be one and only one best way to enact a rule, a conception of revolution as orientation to principle requires the party to flex in relation to the proletariat - to change/violate rule in relation to the development of the proletariat. In the principled version the party (self) leaves the proletariat (other) with something to do - the party treats the energy and initiative as an opportunity to violate rule in the service of principle. Failure to orient to principle would inevitably lead to a rule-bound, ie bureaucratic, conception of the party. Hence....24

"The predominance of bureaucratic centralism in the state is a sign that the governing group is saturated and is turning into a narrow clique whose object is to safeguard its own petty privileges, restraining or even stifling the development of opposing forces, even when those forces are in accord with the basic interests of the ruling elements...The pathological manifestations of bureaucratic centralism are due to a lack of initiative and responsibility at the base, that is to say political backwardness."

The bureaucratic conception of the party is thus one-sided and abstract in the sense that it is fixated upon its own development in isolation from the proletariat. Bureaucratic revolutionaries (see the discussion of Stalin in Chapter 5) do not see the contradiction of having an 'advanced' party vanguard leading a 'backward' proletariat. Gramsci's view of the role of the party

as guide and teacher shows his awareness that the teacher cannot advance unless he is aware of the level of development of his pupil (of the level of consciousness of the proletariat). The party exercises guidance by orienting not to itself, but to the potential for the all-round development of the proletariat in any given set of conditions. The only 'cure' for bureaucratic deformation is the development of the culture and consciousness of the proletariat, ie 'at the base'.

Having attempted to give Gramsci a place within the principled tradition of revolutionary thought, we ought to seek to deepen our analysis by considering the available critiques of Gramsci. One important strand of thought argues that while Gramsci displayed originality and incisiveness, his theorising is both fundamentally contradictory and lacking in sufficient clarity and precision to be an effective guide for modern revolutionary movements in the West. This is the position adopted in yet another piece by Perry Anderson ²⁵ who argues that Gramsci's concept of hegemony is ambiguous and ill-defined. Now, we do have to recognise that there is a certain force to these criticisms. Gramsci's work is often apparently vague and 'unfinished'. Likewise we have to be aware that the basis of his theorising, ie 'The Prison Notebooks' is just that - notebooks, rather than fully developed analysis. However I wish to take issue with the essence of the conventional critique of Gramsci. What actually underpins the view that Gramsci's praxis is flawed because of imprecise definition of his basic concepts (such as

'hegemony') is the notion that we can read off rules of revolutionary practice from 'correct' theoretical perspectives. If revolution is conceived of in a rule-bound way, then the best that can be said of Gramsci's theorising is that it is indecisive or ambivalent. However, our alternative - seeing revolution as engaged and universal orientation to principle - necessitates that theorising be flexible - recognises that if theory and practice are to be unified principle has to be seen as something which can be oriented to in a variety of ways within the constraints of universalism and an engaged antipathy to abstraction. Now, for the rule-bound, this would seem like nihilism. Intelligibility, for them, means the presence of (adequately) correct rules. It is the absence of rule conceived in this way which makes Gramsci seem problematic. To the rule-bound perspective, the principled version of Gramsci appears to amount to 'anything goes' in relation to revolutionary praxis. No rules, in short, equals dis-orientation for them. We can counter this by demonstrating that, while principle can be embodied universally and non-abstractly in a variety of ways, flexibility is not to be confused with indifference.

What we shall seek to demonstrate is that flexibility requires discipline, rather than indifference, and an all-round, rather than (what the rule-bound view produces) a partial conception of revolution. In this context it is instructive to examine critically the claim made by the theorists of Eurocommunism to be the true inheritors of Gramsci's legacy 26. Put very baldly,

Eurocommunist theories attempt to put forward a view of creeping revolution being appropriate to the advanced capitalist societies. They interpret Gramsci's concept of 'passive' revolution to suggest that revolution can proceed by the proletariat attaining 'the gradual conquest of some powers' within capitalism; thus almost by sleight of hand changing the nature of capitalism. Now our objection to this view is not that it is tactically incorrect ('the wrong rules'), though this argument has been advanced. 27 What we argue is that this is a one-sided violation of Gramsci understood as a principled theorist. The crucial issue is understanding that Gramsci never saw 'passive' stages of revolution in isolation from the ultimately 'active' stages that they would assume. The 'passive' stage is always a preparation for a period when a revolutionary crisis would occur, necessitating an 'active' stage of direct and decisive confrontation with the bourgeoisie. Thus Eurocommunism falls short of being genuinely revolutionary in a principled sense. Firstly it has no place (no stomach for confronting the necessity) for a 'turn', ie a qualitative rather than quantitative change (a revolution might require the accretion of 'concessions' from the bourgeoisie, but this does not exhaust the concept of a revolutionary praxis). Secondly, as Marx and Lenin knew, the extent of development of proletarian culture and consciousness required the test of its maturity in a period of revolutionary crisis, ie in what Gramsci calls the 'active' phase of revolution. Recognising the all-round integrity of active and passive phases, and generating the self-consciousness and

cultural strength of the proletariat for the thorough test that will inevitably be applied of its maturity in the active phase is a fundamental feature of Gramsci's theorising.

Section III

In seeking to deepen our critique of Gramsci we ought to confront directly an important question which has, thus far, only been addressed in an oblique manner. The question we should focus on is why is Gramsci a good exemplar of modernism? What is specifically modernist about Gramsci's perspective? In order to begin to answer this question we should consider the following sorts of issues in our analysis:

1. What is Gramsci's relationship to both Marx and Lenin? Does Gramsci merely repeat Marx, or does he genuinely re-orient, in a principled way to Marx? Given Gramsci's evident respect for Lenin, what are the specific contrasts in the relationship of their perspectives?
2. The view of Gramsci as a modernist might fruitfully be compared with that of an alternative, incompatible image - Gramsci as a 'traditionalist'.
3. What are some of the important elements of critique raised by modernists themselves? Here we might look at the recent work of a 'sympathetic' critic, Carl Boggs (28) whose "Gramsci's Marxism" is frequently cited in the literature. Furthermore, we might consider in greater detail one of the most advanced and less 'sympathetic' critiques, Perry Anderson's work (see note 25) 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci'.

With respect to the first issue - that of Gramsci's relation to Marx and Lenin- we may usefully consider the development of views concerning the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism. As we have already noted, (See Chapters 1 & 2), for Marx, the transition to socialist (positive) universalism was unlikely to be achieved until capitalist (negative) universalism had been developed to its limit. Furthermore, as again we indicated earlier, there are intimations in the 'Grundrisse' of Marx glimpsing the long-term durability and elasticity of capitalistic development, notwithstanding the fundamental contradictions within that system. For Marx, an important point is that universal transformation - a real turn in man's nature or essence - requires the transformation of every sphere of man's social existence, not merely the economic or political dimensions of that existence. Although it would be difficult to doubt that Marx consistently underscores his analysis of the ultimate failure of capitalism in terms of its fundamentally contradictory development, there is an important sense in which he leaves the question of the development of capitalism open. Thus, if capitalism is to universalise 'every sphere of existence', this leaves open the question of which spheres of social life remain to be transformed in the course of capitalism's negative universalism. Marx hints that capitalistic development will involve more than the internationalisation of social relations of production - that, for example, race will cease to be a barrier to man's all-round development.

Nonetheless, the story of the continuity of capitalistic development remains contingent in important respects, ie requires to be re-oriented to.

Recalling Lenin's attitude to the story of the continuity of capitalism in relation to the development of socialism, we can see that he has a characteristically direct and relatively unambiguous way of relating to this story. For Lenin, this story is nearing an end point, or at least is in its final chapter. We may recall that for Lenin, 'Imperialism' is the 'Highest Stage of Capitalism'. In this analysis capitalism reaches a zenith point when capital becomes effectively internationalised as a social system through the agency of the market. The important questions, for Lenin, refer to the nature of the relationship between 'advanced' and 'retarded' capitalisms, within the frameworks of an international chain, which we may recall he has 'broken at its weakest link'. What interests Lenin is the movement of large scale economic and material forces with respect to the internationalisation of capital and the political risks and opportunities which this affords revolutionaries. Insofar as he analyses ideology with regard to the 'imperialism as the highest stage' thesis, Lenin is content to note that the super-profits obtained from imperial expansion enable the bourgeoisie, in the advanced societies, to 'buy-off' the militancy of their domestic proletariats. Here, Lenin is viewing the attitudes and culture of the proletariat in exclusively

conscious and 'rational' terms, ie the proletariat make a conscious and 'rational' decision in relation to the level of wages.

One way to understand Gramsci's originality is to examine his analysis of the prolonged development of capitalism - of its potential to extend the frontiers of (negative) universalism. We have already discussed above, with respect to the concept of hegemony, Gramsci's analysis of the way in which capitalist universalism extends deeply into the culture and consciousness of the proletariat in the advanced societies. However, perhaps one specific example will highlight the extent to which Gramsci is aware of capitalism's continuing capacity to extend its locus of control, to a much greater degree than Lenin.

The example we may consider is Gramsci's discussion of developments within the most advanced capitalism of his times -- the United States. In the much-neglected section of 'The Prison Notebooks' entitled 'Americanism and Fordism', Gramsci examines ways in which both the state and private capital encroach upon wider and wider areas of the everyday life of the American proletariat. Thus Prohibition is seen as an attempt by the state to regulate and discipline the behaviour of the proletariat to fit in with the exigencies of manufacturing technology. More interestingly, he goes on to discuss the activities of the leading capitalist entrepreneurs in the following way.....29

"It is worth drawing attention to the way industrialists (Ford in particular) have been concerned with the sexual affairs of their employees and with their family arrangements in general. The truth is that the new type of man demanded by the rationalisation of production and work cannot be developed until the sexual instinct has been suitably regulated and until it too has been rationalised."

and furthermore....30

"It seems clear that the new industrialism wants monogamy: it wants the man as a worker not to squander his nervous energies in the disorderly and stimulating pursuit of occasional sexual satisfaction. The employee who goes to work after a night of 'excess' is no good for his work."

These passages are indicative, not just of the fact that Gramsci is sensitive to the extension of capitalistic universalism into broader and broader areas of the conscious, everyday activities of the proletariat, but that capitalists were just beginning to move the site of class struggle into a qualitatively different realm compared to that of the conscious. Gramsci is here anticipating the invasion of capitalism beyond the conscious activity of humans into the unconscious and the subconscious - the realm of the instinctual. Thus, the intensification of oppression and the stimulation of production are not just to be achieved by the mechanisms identified by Marx and Lenin, such as the 'reserve army of the unemployed' in times of crisis, or the use of 'high wages' in times of boom, all of which act upon the conscious, calculative rationality of the proletariat. (This is not to say Gramsci ignores these mechanisms which were and remain important levers to capital - for example he discusses the role

important levers to capital - for example he discusses the role of 'high wages' in Fordised industries in the USA.) The new realm, which capital is beginning to invade, for Gramsci is the psyche - the potential for controlling the subconscious drives and instincts of the proletariats of the advanced societies.

While Gramsci's observations here do not amount to a developed theory of sexuality, they nonetheless anticipate many of the concerns of modernists. In particular, Gramsci's linking of sexual oppression to the demands of the new technological rationality of modern capitalism is resonant of Herbert Marcuse's discussion in 'Eros and Civilisation'. Similarly the North American Marxist, Carl Boggs, argues that Gramsci....³¹

"produces some insights into the nexus puritanism-capitalism-family that were paralleled within Marxism only by the pioneering work of Wilhelm Reich."

What is distinctly modernist in Gramsci's approach is that he recognises that these observations concerning the invasion of the psyche have consequences for a revolutionary praxis. This is particularly significant with respect to Gramsci's relationship to socialist feminism. Gramsci draws two conclusions from the forced integration of the sexual, family and productive dimensions in contemporary capitalism. Firstly, ³² he notes that it is likely that the most progressive (in a liberated, socialist sense) attitudes to sex and morality would be likely to develop amongst those furthest removed from the production process. Secondly, and most importantly, he observes that

women's struggle against male domination is likely to trigger new patterns of consciousness and action which may undermine bourgeois hegemony within the production process itself. It is important to see here that while Gramsci's stress is upon the integrated, or organic nature of this struggle, he recognises that feminist struggle will necessitate an important degree of autonomy, as the following passage indicates....33

"The formation of a new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil order connected with the sexual question. Until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics."

In other words, although female struggle will have consequences for the whole structure of bourgeois life, the creation of a new feminine personality and identity is necessarily the work of women themselves.

We may now be in a better position to develop our understanding of Gramsci's relation to Marx and Lenin. While Marx never underestimated the elasticity of capitalism in his later writings, (especially in "The Grundrisse"), his vision of the development of capitalist (negative) universalisation left us with only glimpses of that potential. Gramsci's analysis carries forward Marx's vision, and is essentially a development of it. Where Marx tends to be abstract and cryptic in relation to the potential of this development, Gramsci provides analysis of

specific tendencies, ie more than glimpses. With respect to Lenin, Gramsci sees that capitalism may not stop at the process of internationalisation and the 'imperial stage'. If Lenin sees a 'highest stage' or final chapter, what we have sought to show is that Gramsci sees a continuing story, with the struggle against bourgeois hegemony moving on to new dimensions.

There is one further area of Gramsci's relation to Lenin that I wish to develop. This relates to their respective images of the revolutionary actor. As we argued at an earlier point in this chapter, Gramsci viewed the revolutionary party not as a separate vanguard unit which dominated the proletariat, but as involved in an 'organic' way with the broad cultural as well as political dimensions of the life of the proletariat. Failure to develop this broad counter-hegemonic strategy would lead to failure.

The image of the revolutionary actor which emerges from Gramsci's discussion is to be distinguished from that of Lenin. The model of a revolutionary made available by Gramsci is of an individual who is firmly integrated into the social and cultural, as well as political, life of the proletariat. This is in stark contrast to the Leninist image of the revolutionary actor (discussed in greater detail below in Section IV of this chapter); the full-time professional of the vanguard party who concentrates all of his energies on the political struggle. It follows from Gramsci's discussion that in the 'organic' or 'war of position' phase of transformation the extra-party structures such as

educational groups, and the whole range of counter-hegemonic bodies play an indispensable role. Furthermore, in the decisive phase, ie 'war of movement' phase of revolution these structures are not abandoned as 'peripheral'.

In order to clarify our analysis of Gramsci's place in the revolutionary enterprise we ought now to turn to available critiques of Gramsci by modernists.

The first area of critique we may consider is the tension between traditionalist and modernist tendencies within Gramsci's thought. In this area I shall mainly be concerned with criticisms that may be launched by socialist feminists, and the 'sympathetic' critique of Carl Boggs. There is an important area of Gramsci's thought that may be considered 'traditionalist', ie his advocacy of 'workers' councils'. This is regarded as particularly traditionalist by socialist feminists in the sense that it tends to put the focus of political and social struggle firmly within the context of the sphere of 'the point of production', thus excluding large sections of women from participation in revolutionary action. It is significant here that there is no mention of the idea of 'workers' councils' in his final theoretical work, 'The Prison Notebooks'. Carl Boggs attempts to provide some tentative answers to the question of why Gramsci ignored the question of the councils in 'The Prison Notebooks'. Thus he argues that: (a) Gramsci may have felt he dealt adequately with the councils in the pre-Notebooks period, and (b)

Gramsci was now concerned with developing new methods by which Fascism could be countered. These arguments seem a little weak as well as contradictory in the sense that any investigation of countering Fascism would necessitate investigating why prior organisational forms, such as the 'councils', had failed to prevent Fascism's growth. It is noteworthy that Boggs ends his speculation here by conceding that....³⁴

"it is too bad that Gramsci never really took up the problem of the councils in the 'Notebooks', since it leaves some important strategic questions unanswered."

It might plausibly be argued that Gramsci abandoned the concept of the councils because they were too partial or restricted a form for mass struggle, ie too restricted to the 'point of production' sphere. Indeed this view is implicit in an earlier part of Boggs' discussion. ³⁵ Gramsci's omission of what he regarded as an important pre-figurative form from the discussion of his developed vision may indeed be regarded as a serious weakness.

The second critique I wish to consider is one of the most sophisticated, that offered by Perry Anderson in his article, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci' which we have referred to briefly earlier in this chapter. Anderson presents two main elements of critique. Firstly, he suggests that Gramsci overstresses the role of consensus in establishing and maintaining hegemony, and that Gramsci tends to ignore the importance of the use of force in revolutionary transformation.

Anderson argues that Gramsci ignores the point that....36

"The coercive state machine is the ultimate barrier to a workers' revolution and can only be broken by pre-emptive counter coercion."

and, 37

"A revolution will only succeed if the repressive apparatus of the state itself divides and disintegrates as it did in Russia, China or Cuba."

Now, it seems that while there may be some point to the charge that Gramsci over-emphasised the role of consensus, the argument that he ignored the role of force in the 'ultimate' phase of revolution is less strong. We may only recall an earlier part of this chapter (see note 29) where we noted Mandel's analysis which showed clearly that Gramsci was well aware that the consensual element dominant in the 'passive' phase of revolution always was linked to the 'active' phase, or war of movement where violence and force would predominate.

The second element of Anderson's critique is, however, more probing of Gramsci. Here Anderson points out certain decisive areas of vagueness in Gramsci's analysis. In particular he points out there are three different and contradictory views of the relationship between civil society and the state offered by Gramsci in the 'Notebooks'. The significance of this observation lies in the fact that these ambiguities make it difficult to see clearly the process by which a bourgeois society reaches a decisive phase of crisis. Here the point is not so much that

Gramsci ignores the phase of confrontation with the bourgeoisie, ie the active phase of revolution, as that he leaves obscured the dynamics of the relationship between civil society and the state which would allow us to understand the process of movement from 'passive' to 'active' phases of revolution. This presents another serious flaw in Gramsci's overall, universal vision.

Section IV

One of the main benefits of considering socialist feminism as a mode of modernist theory on revolution is that this exemplifies well the argument that modernism need not degenerate into a visionless and masochistic pessimism. Socialist feminism represents one of the main sources of dynamic activism in the left in the advanced societies. Instead of quiescence socialist feminists offer verve and a resurgence of innovative socialist vision; instead of introversion they engage a broad audience - above all they offer a challenge to revitalise the tradition which we ignore at our cost. To write about modernist conceptions of revolution without attempting to take up the challenge of socialist feminism is to fail to come to terms with the spirit of the age.

Although the socialist feminist literature is already voluminous and growing, I wish to concentrate on two main texts; these are Juliet Mitchell's 37 'Woman's Estate' and Sheila Rowbotham et al's 38 'Beyond the Fragments'.

We can commence by considering the universal character of socialist feminism's mode of orientation to principle. Here the work of Juliet Mitchell is instructive. In 'Woman's Estate' Mitchell argues against any partial analysis of the place of women. Woman's position, for her, is defined in relation to four

interlinked dimensions or 'structures' - namely production, reproduction, socialisation of children and sexuality. While production, defined broadly (she understands production as 'social-human activity'), remains the basis of her analysis, as with Marx, this dimension is seen as taking its meaning in terms of its relation to the other three dimensions. Hence she argues against an abstract conception of production which would see production in isolation from all other dimensions. Thus Mitchell offers the following observations....39

'This is a reminder that while one structure may be the weak link in a unity like that of woman's condition, there can never be a solution through it alone.

What, then, is a possible revolutionary attitude? It must include both immediate and fundamental demands, in a single critique of the whole of women's situation, that does not fetishise any dimension of it....

The four elements of women's condition form a structure of specific inter-relations. The contemporary family can be seen as a triptych of sexual, reproductive and socialisatory functions (the woman's world) embraced by production (the man's world). The exclusion of women from production - social human activity - and their confinement to a monolithic condensation of functions within a unity - the family - which is precisely unified in the natural part of each function, is the root cause of the contemporary social definition of women as natural beings.....

The error of the old socialists was to see the other elements as reducible to the economic; hence the call for the entry of women into production was accompanied by the purely abstract slogan of the abolition of the

family. Economic demands must be accompanied by coherent policies for the other three elements; policies which at particular junctures may take over the primary role in immediate action."

What Mitchell, as with Rowbotham, is offering amounts to a principled account of the position of women, in the same way as Marx had offered a principled account of the dialectical development of mankind as a whole. In each case the emphasis is upon conceiving of existence as a totality, and human development as the decisive transformation of the potential inherent in human essence. Mankind's (and women's) relationship to the natural world has to be seen not as it appears - as a 'natural' relationship - as ineluctable fate, but as a social and contingent relationship - offering up the possibility of decisive intervention - revolutionary change.

In 'Beyond the Fragments - Feminism and the Making of Socialism', Rowbotham et al make the observation that the main challenges to advanced capitalism in recent years have come from the 'sectoral', 'partial' or fragmentary sources. Thus the women's movement, the black movement, the anti-fascist movement, tenant and community groups, local shop-stewards' committees have all led more or less successful challenges to the dominance of the capitalist state. In the context of fragmentary struggles the women's movement has occupied a leading role. The strength of these fragmentary movements is related to their specificity. The particularity of each struggle implies a strength derived from the fact that the struggle itself is directly engaged with the

those involved in the struggle. However this weakness, a barrier in the sense that it is what cuts off the possibility of generating (developed) response to oppression. Socialist need to totalise or universalise these partial projects which preserves the autonomy, innovativeness of these partial projects - in short socialist need to 'go beyond the fragments'. Thus they

"we need a very flexible and yet coordinated form of organisation. It needs to be able to build on and make links between all the initiatives towards popular democracy and control which working people are already creating, however limited and fragmented these initiatives may be."

Going beyond the fragments means moderating the excesses of specificity or partiality (leaving the fragments as they are) and, on the other hand, an abstract or totalitarian enforced or excessive unity which stunts the growth of the separate fragments.

To understand the universal orientation of socialist feminism if we ask the question, Why go beyond the fragments? It would be a significant question, say, for 'life-style' or radical (ie in the sense of 'separatist') feminists who could characterise as a thoroughgoing partiality in contrast to the universalism of socialist feminists. The answer to this question is somewhat complex. However consideration of

the following extract may help us to focus more clearly on the question.....41

"The problem is that of gathering together all the different sources of strength, uniting the social power of the community with the industrial power of those in production, and pitching this popular power against the existing state. This requires a strategy based on the ideas and experiences of each movement, and drawing from the lessons of past struggles and from international experiences."

There are two reasons why a partial, or piecemeal or fragmentary response to the problems of oppression of each of these groups: women, blacks, etc., is not appropriate. Firstly the sources of each of the various forms of oppression are interconnected, ie the oppressed face common enemies. So women do not just face the sexual division of labour and a sexist culture; blacks do not just face racial discrimination and exploitation; workers do not just face the representatives of capital, as though each were an entirely separate protagonist. The contemporary capitalist state - through its control of an interlinked set of institutions, and its control over production and culture - is a basic feature of the reproduction of all forms of oppression.

Secondly the organising force of oppression, the contemporary capitalist state, is itself a unified, integrated and (negatively) universal form. This integration or universalising tendency can be seen in a variety of concrete manifestations, for example in the increasingly international character of the organisation of both capital and state. Furthermore this process

can be identified in the extension of social control into further and further areas of the existence of the mass of the population through such agencies as the media and so on. Thus any successful attempt to transform any one element of oppression has itself to become integrated, or universalised. What socialist feminists are saying is that the universal character of a socialist vision is a necessary feature of any successful challenge to oppression within contemporary capitalism.

What is significant about socialist feminism is the way in which it has opened up the universal character of the socialist vision; indicating wider and wider areas which require to be transformed if a genuine socialism is to be established in the advanced societies. Accordingly Rowbotham argues that....42

"The women's movement has touched many areas of politics socialists have neglected and its hold goes deeper. It absorbs more of your being."

and furthermore....43

"It has meant that the women's movement has been able to grow organically in areas of life in which it is difficult for Leninist groups to 'inject' themselves into. It implies a politics in which the very process of radicalisation carries the necessity of taking initiatives in many aspects of our lives. If this is not to be an impossible and soul-breaking idea it requires the conscious creation of cultural forms and a personal vision of politics."

In short, capitalism has to be transformed universally, all areas of experience within capitalism including the personal are to be

seen as sites of struggle - locations for the creation of free and universally associating individuals. There are two inter-related consequences of the observations of Rowbotham et al. Firstly socialists require to learn from the values and mode of engagement ('organisational form') of the women's movement. Secondly, and equally important, the women's movement has to see its own limits (something which not all feminists are willing to acknowledge). Thus Rowbotham is wise and honest enough to say....44

"But despite its creativity, feminism by definition expresses the experience of one sex. It is necessarily partial."

The women's movement requires to integrate, totalise or universalise itself within a broader struggle. Rowbotham attempts to develop a view which shows, despite the problems inherent in such an enterprise, that socialism and feminism can become mutually supportive, ie neither one being fully absorbed into the other, nor remaining separate in a sterile dislocation.

As we have seen Rowbotham argues that socialist feminism requires a 'personal vision of politics'. This can be seen as an outcome of a principled commitment to universalism. Because the socialist vision is an all-round view of mankind, every sphere of existence, including that of the personal, requires to be transformed. Furthermore, the negative universality of capitalism makes this an inevitable requirement, since capitalism itself confronts us (alienatively) on personal terrain, in our

everyday life. The commodity form of production within capitalism invades every sphere of life, converting personal life into an object for sale on a market, converting personal interaction, human and social relationships into relationships between objects. Socialist feminism points out that staking a claim to the personal - reclaiming and re-defining the personal is itself an action of revolutionary potential.

In a concrete sense, the commitment to integrating the personal into a revolutionary vision can be seen in terms of the felt need of feminists to include their personal history as a moment in their discussion of the history of feminism. Rowbotham is no exception here, as she begins her analysis by saying 'I think it helps to say how you've entered a particular train of thought' and proceeds to discuss how her consciousness has altered as a result of personal involvement with a variety of left groups. In this process she reveals, for example, how she began to have a clearer attitude to the death of her father through her participation in consciousness-raising groups. How far removed this is from the calculated distancing of Trotsky in his 'My Life' referred to in Chapter Five. At a deeper level, then, this stress upon the personal is an outcome of a commitment to the universal development of humanity.

We can deepen our understanding of the 'personal politics' of socialist feminism if we compare it to an im-personal, or abstract, alternative. For Rowbotham et al what is deficient

about both reformist socialism and Leninist revolutionary socialism is their dependence upon a partial view of politics.

Hence....45

"The flaw which they (reformism and Leninism) have in common is that they are both organised in ways more appropriate to siezing power - governmental power and state power respectively - than to the necessary preliminaries to raising and extending socialist consciousness and grass-roots consciousness among the majority of working people."

Leninist groups, in particlar, are accused of being partial in the sense that they are 'unable to contribute to and encourage the many sources of socialist initiative and activity'. The fundamental difference between a socialist revolution which is universal in its scope and a partial revolution (siezure of purely political power) is underlined.

Leninism's partiality is perceived as producing an exclusive view of political organisation. Hence the characteristic Leninist view that the revolutionary party be peopled by a (small) group of professional revolutionaries, the sole bearers of 'correct' theory. For Rowbotham this has a ring of Calvinism to it since she argues of Leninists that....46

"Being an elect they can rely on no one and being an elect they have to do everythin."

The exclusivity of contemporary Leninism is thus seen as a form of abstraction - of impersonality. The modern Leninist is seen as having no real sense of dialectic - self is conceived of

excessively, such that there is no room for the place of other except in a subordinate or rule-bound sense.

Modern Leninists might be tempted to reply to this that they have 'extended their areas of intervention to include women's, blacks' and homosexuals' rights', and that they recognise that 'quality of life' or cultural questions require attention. This is not satisfactory as a response. Rowbotham argues that....⁴⁷

"Presenting consciousness in the compartments of political, economic, cultural, social, personal, makes it impossible to see how the different forms feed and sustain one another. Feminism has shown how consciousness spills over these boundaries."

So contemporary Leninism remains partial (compartmentalised) in failing to see that a mechanised extension of areas of activity (adding to the list of potential contacts) is not to be confused with a genuine integration - a genuine universalism. A dialectical concept of integration recognises the place of a qualitative rather than a quantitative change; and, further, recognises the whole or totality as always more than the aggregated sum of its parts. As with Gramsci's insistence upon 'organic' modes of orientation, socialist feminism recognises that genuine intergration requires that the always newly constituted relationship between the parts changes the qualitative character of the totality.

What this discussion should begin to help us to realise is the notion that socialist feminism is a moral enterprise in the sense

that it never treats the question of the good of revolution as secured (never fetishises theory - never orients to theory as [pre-ordained] rule). Thus socialism itself is seen as something which will always be at issue universally. The critique of modern Leninism offered by Rowbotham is a moral critique - a critique which asks Leninism to face up to the question (of the good of revolution) which Leninists thought they had secured long ago. Moreover, Rowbotham's critique amounts to a charge of partiality or one-sidedness - pointing to a failure of Leninism to orient universally to principle. Consider the following statement from 'Beyond the Fragments': 48

"We need a form of organisation which can at once allow for the open expression of conflict between different groups and develop the particular understandings which all these differences bring to socialism. For if every form of oppression has its own defensive suspicions, all the movements in resistance to humiliation and inequality also discover their own wisdoms. We require a socialist movement in which there is freedom for these differences and nurture for these wisdoms. This means that in the making of socialism people can develop positively in their own strengths and find ways of communicating to one another what we have gained, without the transcendent correctness which Leninism fosters."

Leninism treats the question of the universality of struggle (the relation of the separate struggles to the totality) in a rule-bound way. Thus the response to the women's movement is to add a 'line' on women to the party policies, and likewise for all other separate struggles. The bite of Rowbotham's criticism of this view is to show how it cannot aspire to a universal

orientation to principle. A universal (principled) mode of orientation to revolutionary struggle sees that it is just the very interaction between separate sites of struggle out of which the totality must emerge. The question to which an answer cannot be presupposed, but which needs to be constantly raised, is the question of the relationship of 'partial' struggles such as that of women to the total struggle.

An important aspect of the force of Rowbotham's critique is that she is able to bring contemporary Leninism to face up to the responsibility not just for its speech, but also for its silences. Thus Rowbotham shows her commitment to a moral version of revolution by making Leninists confront the issue of their silence concerning their own values. (This is an area of interest shared with a thoughtful commentator on Rowbotham, Richard Gunn.) 49 Rowbotham points out.....50

"....the strange lack of self-consciousness
which the left has towards its own values."

This is indeed an acute observation since the left does frequently display an ignorance of its own moral basis. Characteristic responses to questions of value are either literally silence, or what is grounded in silence - a form of curt nihilism. This nihilism finds its expression in a variety of coping tactics all of which orient to speech as rule, ie which seek to ignore (fail to engage with) the grounds of Rowbotham's speech. For example - a form of scientism is often brought in to deflect this question - 'Marxism is a science: we are concerned

with objective reality (what is); what ought to be is a question that only non-scientists (metaphysicians) think they can answer.' At best vague abstractions are offered concerning 'the liberation of everyone'.

However, Rowbotham knows what we do, that the question of the moral character of our conception of revolution cannot be evaded. She shows that Leninists do display a conception of morality in their image of what it means to be a socialist. The characterisation of the professional revolutionary is painted in the following way....51

"Values are carried not only in implicit attitudes but through the dark shadow of the individual revolutionary. This individual militant appears as a lonely character without ties, bereft of domestic emotions, who is hard, erect, self-contained, controlled, without the time or ability to express loving passion, who cannot pause to nurture, and for whom friendship is a diversion."

This is not just a caricature - the images are resonant enough for anyone with experience of revolutionary organisations. However it is intended to engage with the fantasies as well as the conscious practices of part of the left. Questions of the good of revolution cannot be postponed, because the future of revolution itself is grounded in our success or failure in orienting to questions of value.

We ought to be careful to note that Rowbotham's extension of the concept of universalism produces not an abstract, but an engaged

version of universal development. Indeed the whole focus of Rowbotham's analysis is fixed upon a critique of the debilitating impact of abstraction. (She is not so clear, however, on the relationship between theory and abstraction - see below). The engaged character of her vision of universalism can be grasped if we consider her stress upon the creation of 'prefigurative forms' and a 'pre-figurative politics'. The development of our understanding of prefiguration is one of the main areas within which socialist feminism can be seen to be a vital force. Rowbotham herself acknowledges this when she says...52

"Feminism has been the main organisational form through which the idea of prefigurative politics has begun to influence the contemporary left."

There are two senses in which Gramsci and Rowbotham share a common and developed notion of an engaged universalism - of a prefigurative politics. Firstly they both recognise the necessity of beginning to create prefiguratively socialist modes of association within capitalism. Secondly they both are well aware of the limits of prefiguration within capitalism. Let us deal with these points one by one.

The first aspect of commonality relates to the shared understanding that socialist forms do not appear ex nihilo (nor do they automatically appear as a result of a seizure of partial [state] power). Rowbotham's theorising recognises the sense of Gramsci's principled notion that socialist forms have to emerge 'from the womb of capitalism'. Much of Rowbotham's discussion of the movement towards socialism concerns the attempt to create (prefigurative) forms which anticipate the free and universal mode of association characteristic of the society being striven towards. Secondly, however, both Gramsci and Rowbotham recognise the limits of prefigurative forms within capitalism - they recognise that their theorising should be engaged rather than abstract, utopian or non-engaged. Gramsci realises that the modes of association created within the passive phase of revolution are both limited and essentially geared towards an eventual active phase of confrontation with the bourgeois state. Likewise Rowbotham's analysis of prefiguration is mindful of its limits. Thus she argues that.....53

"I am not suggesting that we can evolve towards socialism thorough self-help or that all forms of self-help are necessarily radical or that self-help cannot co-exist with a new form of labour reformism. It is evident that the coercive power of the state must be contested."

and more pointedly.....54

"In one sense there is no absolute solution within capitalism."

Thus pre-figuration would help to create some of the sources of all-round strength required within socialism, but this strength requires the test that will come in a head-on and unavoidable confrontation with the negative universalism of the advanced capitalist state.

We might ask, then, what are the prefigurative forms which are so significant to the socialist-feminist vision? Rowbotham discusses two forms in some detail - consciousness-raising groups and rape crisis centres. I wish to focus upon the notion of the rape crisis centre. To some, this would seem to be a form of social-work rather than a pre-figurative form of socialism. This is an understandable, but essentially philistine response. This form of organisation is deeply socialist and revolutionary in that it is oriented to the universal consciousness of all women. Thus rape crisis centres are, as well as a response to the immediate needs of some women - the raped - also engaged at a deep level with the universal self-perception of all women. Rape is the most violent end of a spectrum of oppression directed at the entirety of women. Furthermore, rape crisis centres are an essential feature of a spirited transformation of the status of victim experienced by both proletariat and women as subordinate classes. Thus Rowbotham argues....55

"The Rape Crisis Centre is....a collective effort to overcome the fears within women and a sense of ourselves as victims. They point out that a raped woman has been victimised but this is not her total identity, she does not

remain the passive subject of attack as implied by the word 'victim'. One of the aims of the Centre is to help ourselves, as women, to become aware that we do not have to accept the identity given to us by society."

The Rape Crisis Centre, then, engages with the revolutionary potential of women. Such a prefigurative form generates the energy for a transformation from factual status (victim) to potential status (free, conscious and universally associating individual). As such, forms like the Rape Crisis Centre point to the potential for human liberation immanent within the grossest aspects of bondage and oppression.

Perhaps this is an appropriate moment to anticipate an objection to my analysis of modernism. It could be objected that unifying Gramsci and Rowbotham under the title of modernists (with a principled and engaged concept of revolution) risks glossing differences between the two. Does Rowbotham not criticise Gramsci for being 'merely' a 'sophisticated Leninist'? We ought to note, however, that Gramsci is exempted from the most serious elements of criticism of Leninism - ie he is exempted from the charge of 'utilitarian narrowness'.

We ought, however, to do more than consider what Rowbotham says of the relationship of socialist feminism to Gramsci. While there are detailed differences (most importantly with respect to whether or not a party is an appropriate organisational form within which separate struggles can grow), their perspectives have a great deal more in common than Rowbotham recognises. They

are unified at a deeper level. As we have already argued each shows a principled commitment to a universal vision of revolution in common recognition of:

1. Questions of the nature of man - basic philosophical questions.
2. Culture as a site for the establishment of socialist forms of struggle.
3. The necessity to never lose sight of the question of the moral character of revolution - the good of socialism.
4. The dialectical character of production. Production is seen both as basic to mankind's essence, but is theorised in a broad rather than a narrow and fetishised sense.

A conception of revolution as orientation to rule would see both Gramsci and Rowbotham as fundamentally weak in the sense that they either provide ambiguous rules (Gramsci) or no rules at all (Rowbotham). We see their refusal to subordinate to rule as a strength, derived from the flexibility (readiness to violate rule in the service of principle) required by a universal vision.

A stronger sense of the distinction between Rowbotham and Gramsci was provided in our earlier discussion (see section III) of the 'traditionalist' tendency within Gramsci's writing. In that

section we indicated the hostility of socialist feminists to one of Gramsci's main pre-figurative forms - the 'workers' council'. Although Gramsci's later, more universal, socialist vision of 'The Prison Notebooks' is more compatible with socialist-feminism, the failure to take up the idea of the 'councils' may be indicative of potential contradictions in the way in which Gramsci and socialist-feminists view the process of prefiguration.

Furthermore there is one sense in which Gramsci can be considered superior to Rowbotham. This is in the sense that Gramsci has both a clearer conception of what theory is, and the necessity of theory to the revolutionary enterprise. I do not intend here that Gramsci has an eclectic version of theory - he is quite precise and specific - only an 'organic', ie engaged theorising can provide a socialist of universal vision for mankind.

Rowbotham, however, is less than clear both about what theory is and what theory's place is in relationship to revolution. (This emphasis upon providing a critique of Rowbotham's conception of theory is an interest which also exercises Gunn 56) 'Theory' is not rejected 'in toto'. Rowbotham recognises that we cannot orient to principle, we cannot 'totalise' or 'universalise' without theory. Thus she admits.....57

"Our summation of the whole may be incomplete and imperfect, but we still need it.... It is this kind of activity I mean when I use the word 'theory'. Abstraction should help us to

communicate and spread experience, feelings, understandings and ideas and thus facilitate action."

Although she accepts that theory has some role to play, there is a strong sense in which this appears as a grudging, or reluctant, acceptance. The problem of her analysis is a failure to adequately theorise the relationship between theory and experience. Her treatment of the relationship between theory and experience is inconsistent and vacillating.

In some passages, Rowbotham appears to imply a complete reduction of theory to experience. Thus she argues that (theoretical) views 'are valid because they come from within us, and not because we hold a received correctness'. There are a number of problems with this position. Firstly, there is the problem of the extreme relativity of this position. If theory can simply be read-off from experience, then all theories are of equal validity and status, ie there are no criteria provided, by which socialist feminism could be seen as more valid than any other perspective. Secondly, given these assumptions, it is difficult to see how one could communicate anything other than difference with theory. At the least, differences between perspectives would be difficult to resolve given the incompatibility of individual experiences. Furthermore this version of theory's relationship leaves open the question of by which criteria a theory's validity is to be assessed (see below for extended discussion of this point).

'Theory', then, may have a place, but Rowbotham finds it troublesome and awkward. Thus theory can 'easily become fossilised', or become 'a series of coded signposts which only an elite can decode'. All of this indicates towards a conclusion that theory need not be taken seriously into account. In this context she argues that what it means to theorise is to 'sit back momentarily from our immediate experience.....'. Again, this is a problematic assertion. So we could ask what does the concept of momentarity means? How long do we have to 'sit back' from our experiences, if theorisation is to be characterised as momentary? Theory, here, is seen as a 'dangerous' pursuit, in the sense that to 'sit back' more than momentarily would somehow get in the way of the 'real issue' - revolutionary practice.

Rowbotham goes on to argue that having sat back 'momentarily' to theorise, theory must constantly be 'dipped back into experience'. Once more this leaves unanswered the question of the criteria of validity in assessing theory's relationship to experience. What seems to be implicit in Rowbotham's analysis is the contention that experience, or 'feeling' is the criterion by which theory's validity is to be assessed - a theory is valid if it 'feels right'. However we have to ask what are the criteria used when 'dipping theory back into experience'? What is being ignored here is recognition that establishing criteria of validity is of itself a theoretical activity. The irony of Rowbotham's analysis is that she herself is entering into a theoretical position by asserting that 'feeling' is the criterion

of theory's validity.

Perhaps one of the most important problems in Rowbotham's analysis is that she confuses theory with abstraction. This failure is related to the evident impact of E. P. Thompson's 'The Poverty of Theory' (Merlin, London, 1979) upon Rowbotham's theorising. While this influential, but malign, work is ostensibly an attempt to criticise one theorist - Althusser - it succeeds in attacking all forms of theorising. It is essentially a work of panic, oriented to survival and seeing no place for theory with respect to this. In spite of being seen as a work of socialism, I see it as having more to say about a tradition of thought - a mode of theorising which is antipathetic to theorising - the British Empiricist tradition - than a mode of thought (socialism) which requires a theoretical vision.

What Rowbotham needs to know is how to develop what she has herself unwittingly initiated, ie an engaged or dialectical mode of theorising - theorising which can be both general and universal, but which never loses a grip on particularity - which risks but does not succumb to abstraction. The irony of Rowbotham is that she has herself initiated a theoretical quest of this nature. To fail to develop that engagement or theoretical intervention would be to fail to take up a necessary challenge.

Chapter 1 - Notes and References

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31. Marx, K. 'Capital' op. cit. p. 164
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Chapter 2 - Notes and References

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23. Standard critiques of Marx in the 'conformity to rule' tradition see inaccurate predictions as the primary failing in Marx. For example, Dahrendorf in his 'Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society' Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1965 argues that the rules of Marx's analysis would lead us to expect 'class polarisation' and 'pauperisation' as outcomes - two trends which Dahrendorf argues did not develop along the lines suggested by Marx.
24. Althusser, L. & Balibar, E. 'Reading Capital', New Left Books, London, 1970
25. Marx, K. 'MESW' vol. 1, p. 148
26. Marx was interpreted in this way by both Lenin and Stalin
27. Marx, K. 'MESW' vol. 1, p. 23
28. See Chapter 6 for the principled critique of the Russian Populists who considered that the peasantry rather than the proletariat could be the motive force for a socialist revolution.

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2. Conquest, R. 'Lenin', Fontana, London, 1981.
3. ibid p. 137.
4. Carew-Hunt, R. 'The Theory and Practice of Communism', Penguin, London, 1963, p. 171.
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7. ibid p. 102.
8. ibid p. 25
9. ibid p. 75.

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3. Conquest, R. 'Lenin', Fontana, London, 1981.
4. Kolakowski, L, 'Main Current of Marxism', Oxford University Press, London, 1981, Vol 2 p. 501.
5. Lenin, V. I. 'The State and Revolution' op. cit. p.99
6. ibid p.103
7. ibid p.44
8. ibid p.104
9. ibid p.49
10. ibid p.95-96
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12. Trotsky, L. 'Our Political Tasks' cited in Conquest, R., op. cit. p.47
13. Ulam, A. 'Lenin and the Bolsheviks', London 1965.
14. Lane, D. 'Leninism, A Sociological Interpretation', London, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
15. ibid pp 56-61
16. Lenin, V. I., 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia in 'Collected Works', Moscow, 1960 (vol 3).
17. Lenin, V. I., 'Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism', in 'Collected Works' op. cit. vol. 2.
18. Lenin, V. I., cited in Conquest, R., op.cit. p.108
19. Lenin, V. I., cited in Mendel, A. (ed.) 'Essential Works of Marxism', Bantam, New York, 1977, p.98
20. Lenin, V. I., cited in Conquest, R., op.cit. p.108.
21. Lenin, V. I., cited in Mendel, A., op.cit. p.98

22. Lenin, V. I., 'The Trends and Prospects of Revolution', cited in Turok, B., 'Revolutionary Thought in the 20th Century' Zed, London, 1980, p.63
23. Lenin, V. I., cited in Conquest, R. op.cit. p.113
24. Carr, E. H., 'A history of Soviet Russia' op.cit.
25. Pethybridge, R., 'The Social Prelude to Stalinism' (1974) London, MacMillan.
26. Lane, D. 'Leninism: A Sociological Interpretation' (1981) Cambridge University Press.
27. The main modification proposed by Lane is to introduce class structure as a concept within the framework of the integrative (I) subsystem, ie within what Parsons conceives of as the 'societal community'.
28. This point is established in an astute review of Lane's analysis - Urry, J., 'Review of Lane, D.: Leninism - A Sociological Approach' in 'Sociology' vol. 16, No. 1 pp 154-5.
29. Lane, D. op.cit. p.128.
30. ibid p.68
31. Parsons, T. 'The Social System', London, 1971 Routledge & Kegan Paul pp 166-7.
32. Lenin, V. I., 'Left-wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder', op. cit.
33. ibid p.23
34. ibid p.40
35. ibid p.79-80. Lenin's comments here are in reply to the early Scottish revolutionary, Willie Gallacher.
36. ibid p.59
37. ibid pp. 59-60
38. Lenin, V. I., 'State and Revolution' op.cit. p.81
39. Lenin, V. I., 'Collected Works', Vol 27, Moscow, 1960, p.213.
40. Lenin, V. I., 'Philosophical Notebooks', in 'Collected Works' Vol 38 p.213, Moscow, 1960.
41. Parsons, T., op. cit. pp. 528-532

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 - (a) Tucker, R. 'Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation', Norton, New York, 1977; and
 - (b) Lane, D. 'Leninism: A Sociological Interpretation', Cambridge University Press, London, 1981.
2. Kolakowski, L. 'Main Currents of Marxism', Oxford University Press, London, 1981, vol 3 p. 3.
3. Meyer, A. 'Leninism', Praeger, New York, 1957, pp 782-3.
4. Cohen, S. 'Bolshevism and Stalinism' in Tucker, R. op. cit. p. 12.
5. Gouldner, A. 'Stalinism: A Study in Internal Colonialism' in Telos, No. 34 (1978).
6. Elleinstein, J. 'The Stalin Phenomenon', Grasset, Paris, 1975. The French Communist Party (PCF) has been historically the slowest of the Western European Communist Parties to make any criticism of Stalin. The post-war PCF leader Maurice Thorez wore the label 'Stalinist' a 'a badge of honour'!.
7. ibid p. 88
8. Medvedev, R. 'Let History Judge', Knopf, New York, 1971, p. 362.
9. Medvedev, R. 'On Stalin and Stalinism', London, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 188.
10. Mandel's thesis is really an up-dated elaboration of Trotsky's original critique, especially as it is represented in Trotsky, L. 'The Revolution Betrayed: The Soviet Union, What it is and Where it is going', Pioneer, New York, 1958.
11. Mandel, E. 'From Stalinism to Eurocommunism', New Left Books, London, 1978, pp. 76-7.
12. Lane, D. op. cit. p. 76.
13. ibid p. 78.
14. ibid p. 78.
15. ibid p. 74.

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17. Stalin, J. 'Problems of Leninism', Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers, Moscow, 1934.
18. Stalin, J. 'Foundations of Leninism' op. cit. pp. 170-184.
19. Stalin, J. 'Problems of Leninism' op. cit., cited in Mandel, E. 'From Stalinism to Eurocommunism' op. cit. p. 13. I owe this observation to Mandel.
20. Marx, K. 'The German Ideology' London, 1965, p. 167.
21. Stalin, J. 'Problems of Leninism' op. cit. p. 104.
22. Trotsky, L. 'History of the Russian Revolution' (3 vols.) Pluto, London, 1977.
23. Howe, I. 'Trotsky', Fontana, London 1978, p. 138.
24. Trotsky, L. 'Stalin', Harper, London, 1946.
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28. Trotsky, L. 'Problems of Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture and Science', Pathfinder, New York, 1976.
29. ibid, cited in Howe, I. op. cit. p 84.
30. Trotsky, L. 'The Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution', Pathfinder, New York, 1977.
31. Mitchell, J. 'Woman's Estate' Penguin, London, 1977, p. 72.
32. Howe, I. op. cit. p. 79. In addition this view is shared by Knei-Paz op. cit., and by Trotsky's most famous biographer, Isaac Deutscher in his 3-volume work.
33. See Conquest, R. 'Lenin', op. cit. p. 93.

34. Knei-Paz op. cit. p. 261.
35. See Howe, I. op. cit. p. 145.
36. Trotsky, L. 'History of the Russian Revolution' op. cit. vol. 2, p. 512.

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1. See especially Bettelheim, C. 'The Transition to Socialist Economy', Harvester, London, 1975.
2. See especially Schram, S. 'Mao Tse Tung, Harmondsworth, London, 1967.
3. Corrigan et al, 'For Mao', Macmillan, London, 1978; p.xi.
4. Kolakowski, L., 'Main Currents of Marxism' (3 vols.), Oxford University Press, London 1981.
5. In the above named text Kolakowski admits (vol. 3, p. 495) that with respect to his treatment of Mao, 'More than elsewhere in this book the remarks that follow are based on second-hand information'. A close examination reveals that Kolakowski's reading borrows heavily from the writing of the eminent sinologist, Stuart Schram. Kolakowski relies upon negative elements extracted from Schram, S. (ed.) 'Mao Tse Tung Unrehearsed', Penguin, London, 1974.
6. Kolakowski, op. cit. vol 3, p. 495.
7. *ibid* p. 495
8. *ibid* p. 499
9. Corrigan et al 'For Mao' op. cit. p. xiv.
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11. Marx, K. 'Wages, Prices and Profits' Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1974.
12. Corrigan et al 'For Mao' op. cit. pp 42-3.
13. Mao Tse Tung, 'On Practice' in Mao Tse Tung, 'Selected Works' Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975; vol. 1.
14. Mao Tse Tung, 'On Contradiction' in 'Selected Works', Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975; vol. 1.
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19. *ibid* p. 319.
20. *ibid* p. 323.
21. *ibid* p. 324.
22. See especially the discussion cited in Corrigan et al 'For Mao' *op. cit.* p. 128-129.
23. Mao Tse Tung, 'The Little Red Book of Mao Tse Tung', cited in Schram, S. (ed.) 'Mao Tse Tung Unrehearsed' *op. cit.* p. 15.
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27. Mao Tse Tung, cited in Schram, S. (ed.) 'Mao Tse Tung Unrehearsed' *op. cit.* p. 110.
28. Corrigan, P. et al 'Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory', Macmillan, London, 1978.
29. See especially Lenin, V. I., 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia' (1899) in Lenin, V. 'Collected Works', Foreign Languages Press, Moscow, 1970, vol. 3, pp 23 - 607.
30. See especially Marx. K. 'Marx/Engels - Selected Correspondence', Moscow, 1971; p. 377 where he argues that the Russian Populists' desire for the reconstruction of the 'mir' (village commune) is utopian romanticism.

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6. Bottomore, T., 'Modern Interpretations of Marx', Blackwell, London, 1981, p. 4.
7. Kolakowski, L., 'Main Currents of Marxism', op. cit. Vol 3, p. 220.
8. Althusser, L., 'For Marx', New Left Books, London, 1969, p. 114.
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23. Gramsci, A., '2,000 Pagine di Gramsci', ed. Ferrata & Gallo, cited and translated in Kolakowski, L., 'Main Currents in Marxism' op. cit. Vol 3 p. 245.
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30. ibid pp 304-5.
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34. ibid p. 97.
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41. ibid p. 5.
42. ibid p. 41.
43. ibid pp 81-2.
44. ibid p. 45.
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46. ibid p. 69.
47. ibid pp 110-111.
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50. Rowbotham, S., op. cit. p. 66.
51. ibid p. 140.
52. ibid p. 137.
53. ibid p. 135.
54. ibid p. 146.
55. ibid p. 146.

56. Gunn, R., op. cit. pp 27 ff.

57. Rowbotham, S., op. cit. p. 54.

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